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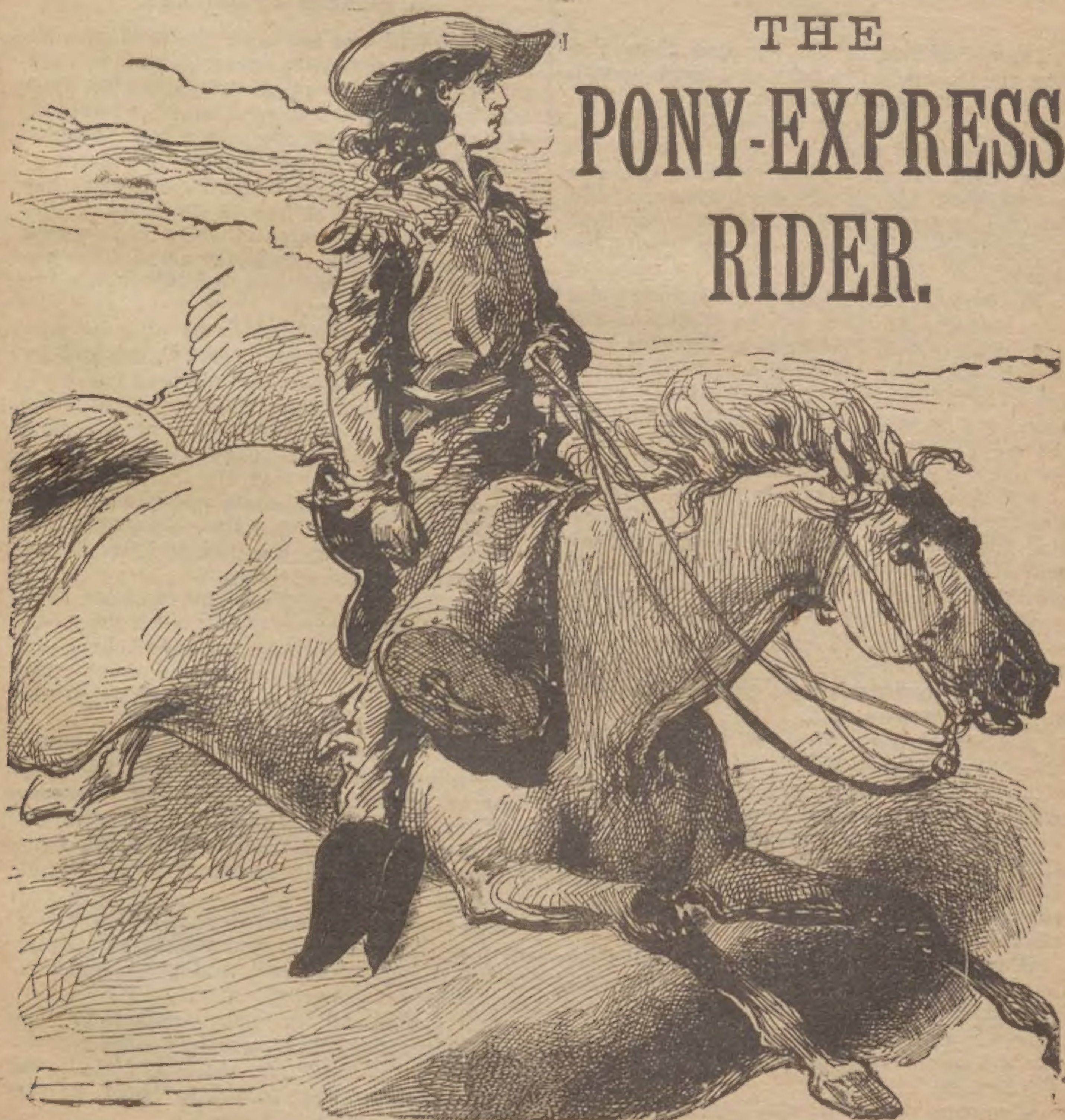
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THE PONY-EXPRESS RIDER.

The Pony-Express Rider;

OR,

Buffalo Bill's Frontier Feats.

Deeds of Daring, Scenes of Thrilling
Peril, and Romantic Incidents
in the Early Life of W. F.
Cody, the Monarch of
Bordermen.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

THAT Truth is, by far, stranger than Fiction, the lessons of our daily lives teach us who dwell in the marts of civilization, and therefore we cannot wonder that those who live in scenes where the rifle, revolver and knife are in constant use, to protect and take life, can strange tales tell of thrilling perils met and subdued, and romantic incidents occurring that are far removed from the stern realities of existence.

The land of America is full of romance, and tales that stir the blood can be told over and over again of bold Privateers and reckless Buccaneers who have swept along the coasts; of fierce naval battles, sea chases, daring smugglers; and on shore of brave deeds in the saddle and afoot; of red trails followed to the bitter end and savage encounters in forest wilds.

And it is beyond the pale of civilization I find the hero of these pages which tell of thrilling adventures, fierce combats, deadly feuds and wild rides, that, one and all, are true to the letter, as hundreds now living can testify.

Who has not heard the name of Buffalo Bill—a magic name, seemingly, to every boy's heart?

And yet in the uttermost parts of the earth it is known among men.

A child of the prairie, as it were, Buffalo Bill will go down to history as one of America's strange heroes who has loved the trackless wilds, rolling plains and mountain solitudes of our land, far more than the bustle and turmoil, the busy life and joys of our cities, and who has stood as a barrier between civilization and savagery, risking his own life to save the lives of others.

Glancing back over the past, we recall a few names that have stood out in the boldest relief in frontier history, and they are Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson and W. F. Cody—the last named being Buffalo Bill, the King of Bordermen.

Knowing the man well, having seen him amid the greatest dangers, shared with him his

blanket and his camp-fire's warmth, I feel entitled to write of him as a hero of heroes, and in the following pages sketch his remarkable career from boyhood to manhood.

Born in the State of Iowa in 1843, his father being one of the bold pioneers to that part of the West, Buffalo Bill, or Will Cody, was inured to scenes of hardship and danger ere he reached his tenth year, and being a precocious youth, his adventurous spirit led him into all sorts of deeds of mischief and daring, which well served to lay the foundation for the later acts of his life.

CHAPTER II.

A CAPTURE OF OUTLAWS.

WHEN Will was but nine years of age his first thrilling adventure occurred, and it gave the boy a name for pluck and nerve that went with him to Kansas, where his father removed with his family shortly after the incident which I will now relate.

The circumstance to which I refer, and that made a boy hero of him in the eyes of the neighbors for miles around where his parents lived, showed the wonderful nerve that has never since deserted him, but rather has increased with his years.

The country school which he attended was some five miles from his father's house and he was wont to ride there each morning and back in the afternoon upon a wiry, vicious little mustang that every one had prognosticated would some day be the death of him.

Living a few miles from the Cody ranch was a poor settler who had a son two years Billy's senior, who also attended the same school, but whose parents were too poor to spare him a horse from the farm to ride.

This boy was Billy's chum, and as they shared together their noonday meal, the pony was also shared, for the boy rode behind my hero to and from school, being called for each morning and dropped off near his cabin on the return trip.

Owing to the lawlessness of the country Mr. Cody allowed his son to go armed, knowing that he fully understood the use of weapons, and his pistol Billy always hung up with his hat upon reaching the log cabin, where, figuratively speaking, the young idea was taught to shoot.

The weapon was a revolver, a Colt's, which at that time was not in common use, and Billy prized it above his books and pony even and always kept it in perfect order.

One day Rascal, his pony, pulled up the lariat pin which held him out upon the prairie and scampered for home, and Billy and Davie Dunn, his chum, were forced to "hoof it," as the western slang goes, home.

A storm was coming on, and to escape it the boys turned off the main trail and took refuge in a log cabin which was said to be haunted by the ghosts of its former occupants; at least they had been all mysteriously murdered there one night and were buried in the shadow of the cabin, and people gave the place a wide berth.

It was situated back in a piece of heavy timber and looked dismal enough, but Billy proposed that they should go there, more out of sheer bravado to show he was not afraid than to escape a ducking, for which he and Davie Dunn really little cared.

The boys reached the cabin, climbed in an open window and stood looking out at the approaching storm.

"Kansas crickets! but look there, Davie!"

The words came from Buffalo Billy and he was pointing out toward the trail.

There four horsemen were seen coming toward the cabin at a rapid gallop.

"Who be they, Billy?" asked Davie.

"They are some of them horse-thieves, Davie, that have been playing the mischief of late about here, and we'd better dust."

"But they'll see us go out."

"That's so! Let us coon up into the loft, for they'll only wait till the storm blows over, for they are coming here for shelter."

Up to the loft of the cabin, through a trap-door, the boys went quickly and laid quietly down, peering through the cracks in the boards. The four horsemen dashed up, hastily unsaddled their horses and lariatied them out, and bounded into the cabin through the window, just as the storm broke with fury upon forest and plain.

As still as mice the boys lay, but they quickly looked toward each other, for the conversation of the men below, one of whom was kindling a fire in the broad chimney, told them that, if discovered, their lives would be the forfeit.

In fact, they were four of a band of outlaws that had been infesting the country of late, stealing horses, and in some cases taking life and robbing the cabins of the settlers, and one of them said plainly:

"Pards, when I was last in this old ranch it was six years ago, when we came to rob Foster Beal who lived here; he showed fight, shot two of the boys, and we wiped the whole family out; but now let us get away with what grub we've got, and then plan what is best to do to-night. As for myself, I say strike old Cody's ranch, for he's got dust."

The boys were greatly alarmed at this, but, putting his mouth close to Davie Dunn's ear, Billy Cody whispered:

"Davie, you see that shutter in the end of the roof?"

"Yes, Billy," was the trembling reply.

"Well, you slip out of there, drop to the

ground and make for your home and tell your father who is here."

"And you, Billy?"

"I'll just keep here, and if these fellows attempt to go I'll shoot 'em."

"But you can't, Billy."

"I've got my revolver, Davie, and you bet I'll use it! Go, but don't make a fuss, and get your father to come on with the settlers as soon as you can, for I won't be happy till you get back."

Davie Dunn was trembling considerably; but he arose noiselessly, crossed to the window at the end of the roof, and which was but a small aperture, closed by a wooden shutter, which he cautiously opened. The noise he made was drowned by the pelting rain and furious wind, and the robbers went on chatting together, while Davie slipped out and dropped to the ground.

But ere he had been gone half an hour the outlaws were ready to start, the rain having ceased in a measure, and night was coming no to hide their red deeds."

"Hold on, boys, for I've got ye all covered. He's a dead man who moves."

Billy had crept to the trap, and in his hoarsest tones, had spoken, while the men sprung to their feet at his words, and glancing upward saw the threatening revolver.

One attempted to draw a weapon, but the boy's forefinger touched the trigger, and the outlaw fell dead at the flash, shot straight through the heart!

This served as a warning to the others, and they stood like statues, while one said:

"Pard, who is yer?"

But Billy feared to again trust his voice and answered not a word. He lay there, his revolver just visible over the edge of the boards, and covering the hearts of the three men crouching back into the corner, but full in the light from the flickering fire, while almost at their feet lay their dead comrade.

Again and again they spoke to Billy, but he gave no reply.

Then they threatened to make it warm for him, and one suggested that they make a break for the door.

But, each one seemed to feel that the revolver covered him, and none would make the attempt, for they had ocular demonstration before them of the deadly aim of the eye behind the weapon.

To poor little Billy, and I suppose to the men too, it seemed as if ages were passing away, in the hour and a quarter that Davie Dunn was gone, for he had bounded upon one of the outlaws' horses and ridden away like the wind.

But, at last, Billy heard a stern voice say:—

"Boys, you is our meat."

At the same time several pistols were thrust

into the window, and in came the door, burst open with a terrific crash that was music to Billy's ears, while in dashed a dozen bold settlers, led by farmer Dunn.

The three outlaws were not only captured, but, being recognized as old offenders, were swung up to a tree, while Billy and Davie became indeed boy heroes, and the former especially was voted the lion of the log cabin school, for had he not "killed his man?"

CHAPTER III.

BILLY'S FIRST DUEL.

NEAR where Billy's father settled in Kansas, dwelt a farmer who had a son and daughter, the former being fourteen, and the latter eighteen.

As is often the case with boys, Billy fell in love with Nannie Vennor, which was the young lady's name, although she at eighteen was just seven years older than he was.

But she had been over to call on the Cody girls with her brother, and a deep attachment at once sprung up between the boys, and Billy became the devoted slave of Nannie, making her a horse-hair bridle for her pony, gathering her wild flowers whenever he went over to the Vennor farm, and in fact being as devoted in his attentions as a young man of twenty-one could have been.

But Nannie had another lover, in fact a score of them from among the neighboring young settlers, but one in particular who bid fair to be Billy's most dangerous rival. This one was a dashing young fellow from Leavenworth, with a handsome face and fine form, and who always had plenty of money.

Folks said he was very dissipated, was a gambler, and his name had been connected several times with some very serious affairs that had occurred in the town.

But then he had a winning manner, sung well, and Nannie's beaux had to all admit that he was every inch the man, and one they cared not to anger.

From the first Billy Cody hated him, and did not pretend to hide the fact; but it seemed the boy's intuitive reading of human nature, as much as his jealousy on account of Nannie Vennor.

One day Billy was seated by the side of a small stream fishing.

The bank was behind him, rising some eight feet, and he had ensconced himself upon a log that had been drifting down the stream in a freshet, and lodged there.

Back from him, bordering the little creek ran the trail to the nearest town, and along this rode two persons.

The quick ear of the boy heard hoof falls, and glancing quickly over the bank he saw

three horsemen approaching, and one of these he recognized as Hugh Hall his rival.

Just back of Billy was a grove of cotton-wood trees, and here the men halted for a short rest in the shade, and all they said distinctly reached the boy's ears.

"I tell you, pards," said Hugh Hall, "I cannot longer delay then, so if old Vennor refuses to let me have Nannie I'll just take her."

"The best way, Hugh; but what about the wife that's now on your trail?" asked one.

"What care I for her, after I have run off with Nannie?"

"But she'll blow on you to old man Vennor."

"I do not care. I'll deny it to Nannie, say the woman is crazy, and one by one the family will drop off until she only remains, and then she'll get the property."

"You are sure it's coming to 'em, Hugh?" asked one.

"I am so sure that I drew up the will of Vennor's brother four years ago, when I was practicing law in Chicago."

"He may have changed his mind."

"Nonsense; he died shortly after, and the will says if Richard Vennor was not found, and the fortune turned over to him, within five years after Robert Vennor's death, the fortune was to go to charity."

"Now I kept the secret dark, came out to look up Richard Vennor, and having found him, shall marry his daughter and get all!"

"Your wife will give you trouble."

"I wish you to get rid of her then, and I'll pay well for it."

"We'll do the job, and help you all we can," said one, and the second one of the pair whom Billy did not recognize, echoed his comrade's sentiments.

"Well, Hugh, we found Lucy was trailing you, and hearing you was about to strike it rich, concluded we'd come and post you for old friendship's sake."

"And I'll pay you for it; but we must not be seen together, so I'll wait here while you ride on to Leavenworth, and in an hour I'll follow you."

This agreement seemed satisfactory, and two horsemen rode away, after a few more words, while Hugh Hall threw himself down upon the grass to rest.

For awhile Billy Cody was very nervous at what he had heard; but he soon grew calm, and having waited until he knew the two men were more than a mile away, he cautiously stood up upon the log and glanced over the bank.

Hugh Hall was fast asleep, and his horse was feeding near.

Noiselessly Billy drew himself upon the bank and approached the man, his faithful revolver held in his hand.

"I wonder if it would be wrong if I killed him, when he is such a villain?" he muttered.

"Yes, I won't do it; but I'll make him go straight to Mr. Vennor and I'll tell him all I heard.

"Here, Hugh Hall, farmer Vennor wants to see you."

The man sprung to his feet, his hand upon his revolver.

But Billy had taken the precaution to get behind a tree, and had the drop on his rival.

"Oh, it's you, you accursed imp of Satan," cried the man angrily.

"Yes, it's me, and I want you to go to Mr. Vennor, for I'm going to tell him all I heard you say," said the boy boldly.

Hugh Hall knew Billy's reputation as a fearless boy and a sure shot, and he saw that he was in great danger; but he said quietly:

"Well, I was going to the farmer's and we'll ride together."

"No, I'll ride and you'll walk, for I came down the stream fishing to-day, and haven't got my pony."

As quick as a flash the man then drew his pistol, and firing, the bullet cut the bark off the tree just above the boy's head.

Instantly however Billy returned the shot, and the revolver of Hugh Hall fell from his hand, for his arm was broken; but he picked it up quickly and leveled it with his left, and two shots came together.

Billy's hat was turned half round on his head, showing how true was the aim of his foe, while his bullet found a target in the body of Hugh Hall.

With a groan he sunk upon the ground, and springing to his side, Billy found him gasping fearfully for breath.

"I am sorry, Hugh Hall, but you made me do it," he said sorrowfully.

But the man did not reply, and running to the horse feeding near, he sprung into the saddle and dashed away like the wind.

Straight to farmer Vennor's he went and told him all, and mounting in hot haste they rode back to the grove of cottonwoods.

Hugh Hall still lay where he had fallen; but he was dead, greatly to Billy's sorrow, who had hoped he would not die.

Then, while farmer Vennor remained by the body, Billy went for the nearest neighbors, and ere nightfall Hugh Hall was buried, and his two allies in crime were captured in Leavenworth, and given warning to leave Kansas forever, which they were glad to do, for they had not expected such mercy at the hands of the enraged farmers.

But before they left they confessed that Billy's story was a true one, and told where the wife of Hugh Hall could be found, and once again did the boy become a hero, even in the eyes of the bravest men, and the settlers

gave him the name of Boss Boy Billy, while Nannie Vennor, now a mother of grown sons, each Christmas time sends him a little souvenir, to show him that she has not forgotten her boy lover who fought his first duel to save her from a villain.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOOTING FOR A PRIZE.

WHILE Mr. Cody was an Indian trader at Salt Creek Valley in Kansas, Billy laid the foundation for his knowledge of the red-skin character, and which served him so well in after years and won him a name as scout and hunter that no one else has ever surpassed.

For days at a time Billy would be in the Indian villages, and often he would go with the warriors on their buffalo and game hunts, and now and then would join a friendly band in a war-trail against hostiles.

Another favorite resort of Billy's was Fort Leavenworth, where his handsome face, fearlessness and manly nature made him a great favorite with both officers and men.

On one occasion while at the fort a large Government herd of horses, lately brought up from Texas, where they had been captured wild on the prairies, stampeded, and could not be retaken.

Once or twice Billy had come into the fort with a pony of the fugitive herd which he had captured, and the quartermaster said to him:

"Billy, if that herd remains much longer free, they will be harder to take than real wild horses, so go to work and I'll give you a reward of ten dollars for every one you bring in, for the Government authorizes me to make that offer."

This was just to Billy's taste, and he went at once home and spent a couple of days preparing for the work before him, and from which his mother and sisters tried to dissuade him; but the boy saw in it a bonanza and would not give it up.

His own pony, Rascal, he knew, was not fast enough for the work ahead, so he determined to get a better mount, and rode over to the fort to see a sergeant who had an animal not equaled for speed on the plains.

Rascal, some sixty dollars, a rifle, and some well-tanned skins were offered for the sergeant's horse and refused, and in despair Billy knew not what to do, for he had gotten to the end of his personal fortune.

"Sergeant," he suddenly cried, as a bright idea seized him.

"Well, Billy?"

"They say you are the crack shot in the fort."

"I am too, Billy."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do to win your

horse, Little Grey. I'll put up all I have offered you against your animal and shoot for them."

"Why, Billy, I don't want to win your pony and money."

"And I don't want you to; but I'll shoot with you for your horse against mine and all else I have offered."

The sergeant was a grasping man, and confident of his powers, at last assented, and the match was to take place at once.

But the officers learning of it were determined Billy should have fair play, and a day was set a week off, and the boy was told to practice regularly with both pistol and rifle, for the terms were ten off-hand shots with the latter at fifty and one hundred yards, and six shots standing with the revolver at fifteen paces and six from horseback, and riding at full speed by the target.

Billy at once set to work to practice, though he had confidence in his unerring aim, and upon the day of trial came to the fort with a smiling face.

Nearly everybody in the fort went out to see the match, and the sergeant was called first to toe the mark.

He raised his rifle and his five shots at fifty yards were quickly fired.

Billy gave a low whistle, but toed the scratch promptly, and his five shots were truer than the sergeant's, and a wild cheer broke from one and all.

At one hundred yards the sergeant's shooting was better than the boy's; and so it was with the pistol shooting, for when standing the sergeant's shots were best, and in riding full speed by the target, Billy's were the truest, and it was called a tie.

"How shall we shoot it off, Billy?" asked the sergeant, who seemed somewhat anxious.

Billy made no reply, but went to his haversack and took from it an apple, and going up to his pony placed him in position, the rein over the horn of the saddle.

The apple he then put on the head of the pony, directly between his ears, and stepping back while all present closely watched him, he threw forward his pistol and fired.

The apple flew into fragments and a wild burst of applause came from all sides, while Billy said quietly:

"I've got another apple, sergeant, for you to try the same on Little Grey."

"I'll not run the risk, Billy, of killing him, so give in; but I'll win him back from you sometime," said the sergeant.

"Any time, sergeant, I'm willing to shoot," replied the boy, and with a happy heart he mounted his prize and set off for home.

CHAPTER V.

WILD HORSE HUNTING.

FOR several days after Billy Cody got his prize he did nothing but train the animal to his use and was delighted to find that Little Grey would follow him like a dog wherever he went.

Having all arranged now for his wild horse hunting, he set out one day from home to be gone a week or more, he told his mother, and with the promise that he would bring her a small fortune soon.

He had already discovered the feeding grounds of the herd, and thither he went at once, arriving in the vicinity shortly before dark.

As he had expected, he found the herd, nearly five hundred in number, but he kept out of sight of them, as it was so near dark, and camped until morning, when he found they had gone up the valley for some miles.

Cautiously he followed them, and getting near unobserved at last made a dash upon them.

Into their midst he went and a good horse was picked out and lariatied in the twinkling of an eye and quickly hopped and turned loose.

Then another and another, until Billy felt that he had done a pretty good day's work.

He had discovered two things, however, and that was that Little Grey seemed more than a match for any of the herd with one exception, and that one was a large, gaunt-bodied black stallion, that appeared to drop him behind without much effort.

"I've got to have him," said Billy, as he returned to his hopped prizes and began to drive them toward the fort.

It was a long and tedious work, but the boy was not impatient and reached the fort at last and received his reward, which he at once carried to his mother and received her warm congratulations upon his first success.

Back to the herd's haunts went Billy, and again he camped for the night, but was aroused at dawn by a sound that he at first thought was distant thunder.

But his ears soon were undeceived as he sprung to his feet, well knowing that it was the herd of wild horses.

Instantly Billy formed his plan of action and mounting Little Grey rode into a thicket near by, which wholly concealed him from view.

Here he waited, for he knew that the herd was coming to the river to drink, and a cry of delight burst from his lips as he beheld the black stallion in the lead.

"It is the horse the settlers call Sable Satan and that belonged to a horse-thief, father told me, who was shot from his back one night.

"Well, if I can catch him I'll be in luck, and I'll try it, though they say he is awful vicious. Be quiet, Grey, or you'll spoil all."

On came the large drove at a trot directly for the river, and a beautiful sight it was as they moved forward in solid mass, with flowing mane and tail and the rising sun glancing upon every variety of color.

The leader was a perfect beauty, black as ink, with glossy hide and long mane and tail—the equine king of the herd.

With his reins well in hand, his lariat ready, and full of excitement, Billy waited for the horses to reach the stream, which they entered to quench their thirst.

As every head was lowered and the nostrils driven deep into the cool waters, out of the thicket dashed the Boy Horse-Hunter, and the clattering hoofs startled the drove, and in confusion and fright they turned to fly.

Straight as an arrow went the boy toward the black stallion, which attempted to dash by with the mass.

But with an unerring hand the lariat was thrown, the coil settled down over the haughty head, a tremendous jerk followed, and Sable Satan was thrown to the ground.

With an exultant cry Billy sprung from his saddle, and quickly formed a "bow-stall"* which, when properly made, is more effective than a severe curb bit—and placed it upon the animal that was choked beyond the power of resistance.

Loosening the lariat around his neck Billy sprung upon the prostrate animal, which, with a wild snort bounded to his feet, and with prodigious leaps started on after the flying herd, his daring young rider firmly seated upon his back.

Finding he could not unseat Billy by bounding, he came to a sudden halt, and then reared wildly; but with catlike tenacity the boy clung to him, and then Sable Satan mad with rage and fright, attempted to tear him from his back with his gleaming teeth.

A severe jerk on the bow-stall however thwarted this, and with a maddened cry the splendid prairie king bounded on once more after the flying herd, a call to Little Grey from Billy causing him to follow at a swift run.

With a speed that was marvelous Sable Satan flew on, directly into the drove, the daring young rider still clinging to him, determined to dare any danger to keep the animal whose capture had baffled the very best horsemen of the plains.

Sweeping through the herd, as though they were stationary, so great was his speed, the black stallion soon left them far behind, and

* A bow-stall "is formed by taking a turn with a rope or lariat between the nostrils and eyes of a horse, and passing one end over the head, back of the ears and tied on the opposite side. A second noose is then made around the jaws and from this the reins lead back toward the rider, who can then thoroughly manage the animal.—THE AUTHOR.

glancing back Billy saw that Little Grey had not cared to venture into the midst of the wild band and was galloping away over the prairies.

Not knowing who might pick him up, and having his rifle, ammunition and provisions strapped to his saddle, he determined to go on after Little Grey, and at once a fierce fight began between the boy and his horse.

But the boy proved the master, and after a severe struggle the black stallion was subdued, and guided by the bow-stall was in full chase of Little Grey, while Sable Satan's former subjects were flying away northward without their leader.

When in chase of Little Grey, Billy soon discovered the remarkable speed of his new capture, for he overhauled his former pet with ease, and now thoroughly broken in, the saddle and bridle were transferred to the black's back, and exultant over his success the boy rode on to the fort, where large sums were offered him for the famous stallion.

But Billy refused each tempting offer, and on Sable Satan set out to capture more of the herd, and which he readily succeeded in doing; but as the Government offer of ten dollars for the fugitive animals became known, there were a number of men starting on the trail of the wild mustangs and though Billy got the lion's share, he did not quite realize the expected fortune, but was content with the few hundreds he made, and the ownership of Sable Satan and Little Grey, the two fastest horses on the Kansas prairies.

CHAPTER VI.

SAVING A FATHER'S LIFE.

WHILE in Kansas Mr. Cody became interested in the affairs of the State and joined the Free State party, and while making a speech on one occasion was deliberately attacked and severely wounded.

He however recovered sufficiently to work on his farm again, but was constantly harassed by his old foes, who on several occasions visited his home with the intention of hanging him.

On one occasion, when in town, Billy learned of an attack to be made upon his father, and mounting Sable Satan rode with all speed out to the farm.

He was recognized and hotly pursued; but he got home in time to warn his father who took Little Grey and made his escape.

The horsemen, a score in number, came to the farm, and finding Mr. Cody gone, the leader struck Billy a severe blow and when he departed carried with him Sable Satan.

This almost broke the boy's heart; but he declared he would some day regain his horse, and for weeks he tried to do so, but without success.

One night two horsemen came to the Cody

farm and again asked for the farmer, but were told by Mrs. Cody that he was away.

They would not take her word for it; but thoroughly searched the house, after which they forced Billy's sisters to get them some supper.

While they were eating Billy and his father returned, and warned by one of the girls, Mr. Cody went up-stairs to bed, for he was quite ill, and suffering from the wound he had received.

But Billy went into the kitchen and saw there the very man who had struck him the severe blow; and who had taken Sable Satan on his last visit.

"Well, boy, that's a good horse I got from you," he said, with a rude laugh.

"Yes, he's too good for such a wretch as you are," was the fearless reply.

"No lip, boy, or I'll give you a licking you'll remember. By the way, where's that old father of yours?" said the man.

Billy made no reply but walked out of the kitchen, to be soon after followed by his sister Mary who said anxiously:

"Oh, Will, they say father must have come with you, and they intend to search the house again."

"Then I'll go up and tell father," whispered Billy, and up-stairs he went.

He found his father asleep, and his mother was seated near him and told Billy he had a high fever.

"Then don't wake him, and I'll not let them come up here," said Billy, and he went out of the room and took his place at the stairs.

A moment after the two men, both with pistols in their hands, came out of the kitchen and started to come up-stairs.

"Stop, Luke Craig, for you can't come up here," said the boy.

With a hoarse laugh the man sprung up the steps to fall back as a pistol flashed in his face and roll back to the bottom, knocking his companion down too.

But the latter quickly sprung to his feet and dashed out of the house to where their horses were hitched.

His horse was a white one, and his comrade's was Sable Satan, and to the latter he ran.

But up went the window and in a loud voice Billy cried:

"I've got my rifle on you, and I'll fire if you take my horse."

The man evidently believed that he would, from what he had seen, and mounting his own horse dashed swiftly away in the darkness, while Billy returned to the one he had shot.

He found him badly wounded, but not fatally, and putting him in his father's buggy drove him to the nearest doctor, at whose house he remained for months before he got well again.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE AND RIVALRY.

FINDING that Billy was becoming far more accomplished as a rider and shot, than in his books, Mrs. Cody determined to send him to a small school that was only a few miles away.

Billy, though feeling himself quite a man, yielded to his mother's wishes and attended the school, which was presided over by a cross-grained Dominie that used the birch with right good earnest and seeming delight.

Of course Billy's love of mischief got him many a whipping; but for these he did not seem to care until there suddenly appeared in the school another pupil in the shape of a young miss just entering her teens.

The name of this young lady was Mollie Hyatt, and she was the daughter of a well-to-do settler who had lately arrived, and was as pretty as a picture.

Billy's handsome face and dark eyes won her young heart, and the love-match was going smoothly along until a rival appeared in the field in the shape of a youth two years the junior of young Cody, and larger and stronger.

These virtues on the part of Master Steve Gobel, with his growing love of Mollie, made him very assuming, and he forced his company upon the little maid, and had things pretty much his own way, as all the boys seemed afraid of him.

As for Billy he let him have his own way for awhile, and then determined not to stand it any longer he sought Steve Gobel for a settlement of the affair, the result of which was, the teacher hearing them quarreling and coming out took the word of young Cody's rival about it, and gave my hero a severe whipping before the whole school.

Since his meeting Mollie Hyatt Billy had been a most exemplary youth, never having had a single whipping, and this cut him to the heart so deeply that he did not seem to feel the pain of the rod.

And it made him treasure up revenge against Steve Gobel, who was laughing at him during the castigation.

The next day Billy built for Mollie a pretty little arbor on the bank of the creek, and all admired it greatly excepting Steve Gobel, who, as soon as it was finished pulled it down.

Poor Mollie began to cry over her loss, and infuriated at beholding her sorrow, Billy rushed upon his rival and a fierce fight at once began between them.

Finding that he was no match for the bully in brute strength, and suffering under his severe blows, Billy drew from his pocket his knife, opened the blade with his teeth, and drove it into the side of his foe, who cried out in wild alarm.

Springing to his feet, amid the frightened of the children, Billy rushed to his pony,

drew up the lariat pin, and springing upon his back, rode away across the prairie like the wind.

Coming in sight of a wagon-train bound for the West, he rode up to it and recognizing the wagon-master as an old friend of his father, he told him what had occurred, and that he feared he had killed Steve Gobel.

"Served him right, Billy, and we'll just go into camp, take the boys along, and go over and clean out the house o' l'arnin'," was the blunt reply of the wagon-master.

But this Billy would not hear to, and the wagon-master said:

"Well, my boy, I'm bound with the train to Fort Kearney, so come along with me, and I'll make a man of you."

"But what will my mother think of me?"

"Oh! I'll send a man back with word to her, while you stay, for I won't give you up to that boy's friends."

And thus it was settled; a man rode back to the Cody farm, and the following day he overtook the train again, and Billy's heart was made glad by a letter from his mother telling him that Steve Gobel was not badly wounded, but that under the circumstances he had better go on with the wagon-master and remain away until the anger of the Gobel family cooled down.

Thus, as a Boy Bullwhacker, Billy made his first trip across the plains, and months after, upon his return home, found that the Gobels had forgiven the past, and that Mary Hyatt had, little coquette that she was, found another beau.

But shortly after his return his father died, and having to aid in the support of his mother and sisters, Billy accepted a position as herder for a drove of Government cattle to be driven to the Army of General Albert Sydney Johnson, that was marching against the Mormons at Salt Lake.

CHAPTER VIII.

KILLING HIS FIRST INDIAN.

WHEN the train and beef-herd, with which Billy Cody had gone, arrived in the vicinity of old Fort Kearney their first serious adventure occurred, and for a while the boy thought of his mother's prediction, that he "would be killed or captured by Indians."

Not expecting an attack from red-skins in that vicinity, the party had camped for dinner, and most of them were enjoying a *siesta* under the wagons, Billy being among the latter number, while but three men were on duty as herders.

But suddenly they were aroused by shots, wild yells, and rapid hoof-falls, and down upon them dashed a band of mounted warriors,

while others had killed the three guards and the cattle were stampeding in every direction. But the train hands quickly sprung to their feet, rallied promptly for the fight, and met the advancing red-skins with a volley from their Mississippi yagers, which were loaded with ball and buck-shot, and checked their advance.

Knowing that they could not hold out there the train-master called out:

"Boys, make a run for the river, and the banks will protect us."

All started, when Billy called out:

"Don't let us leave these wounded boys."

They turned at his word, to find that two of their number had been wounded, one seriously in the side and the other in the leg.

Raising them in their arms they started at a run for the bank, ere the Indians had rallied from the fire that met them, and reached it in safety, though the man who had been shot in the side was dead ere they got there.

A short consultation was then held, and it was decided to make their way back to Fort Kearney, by wading in the river and keeping the bank as a breast work.

A raft of poles was constructed for the wounded man, and the party started down the stream, protected by the bank, and keeping the Indians at bay with their guns, for they followed them up closely.

As night came on, utterly worn out with wading and walking, Billy dropped behind the others; but trudged manfully along until he was suddenly startled by a dark object coming down over the bank.

It was moonlight, and he saw the plumed head and buckskin-clad form of an Indian, who, in peering over the bank to reconnoiter had lost his balance, or the earth had given way, and sent him down into the stream.

He caught sight of Billy as he was sliding down, and gave a wild war-whoop, which was answered by a shot from the boy's rifle, for though taken wholly by surprise he did not lose his presence of mind.

Hearing the war-whoop and the shot, and at the same time missing Billy, the men came running back and found him dragging the red-skin along in the stream after him.

"It's my Injun, boys," he cried exultantly.

"It are fer a fact, an' I'll show yer how ter take his scalp," replied Frank McCarthy the train-master, and he skillfully cut off the scalp-lock and handed it to Billy, adding:

"Thar, that is yer first scalp, boy, an' I'm willin' ter swear it won't be yer last, for Billy, you is ther boss boy I ever see."

Billy thanked McCarthy for the gory trophy, gave a slight shudder as he took it, and said significantly:

"I ain't so tired as I was, and I guess I'll keep up with you all now, for if the bank

hadn't caved in that Injun would have had me."

At daylight they came in sight of Kearney, and after a volley or two at the Indians still dogging their steps, made for the fort and reached it in safety.

The commanding officer at once sent out a force in pursuit of the red-skins; but they neither found them or the cattle they had driven off.

After a short stay at Fort Kearney Billy returned with a train to Leavenworth, where the papers dubbed him the "Boy Indian-Killer," and made a hero of him for his exploit on the South Platte.

CHAPTER IX.

WINNING A NAME.

WHEN Billy returned home, after his first Indian-killing expedition, he carried with him the pay of a bullwhacker, and all of it he placed in his mother's hands, for the death of Mr. Cody had left the family in indigent circumstances.

Finding that she could not keep Billy at home when he had found out that by his exertions, boy though he was, he could support the family, Mrs. Cody gave a reluctant consent for him to make another trip to the far West under an old and experienced wagon-master named Lew Simpson, and who had taken a great fancy to the youthful Indian-fighter.

Bill was accordingly enlisted as an "extra," which meant that he was to receive full pay and be on hand ready to take the place of any one of the train that was killed, wounded, or got sick.

The wagon train pulled out of Leavenworth, all heavily freighted, each one carrying about six thousand pounds weight, and each also drawn by four yoke of oxen under charge of a driver, or "bullwhacker."

The train consisted of twenty-five wagons, under Lew Simpson, then an assistant wagon-master, next Billy, the "extra," a night herder, a cavallard driver, whose duty was driving the loose and lame cattle, and the bullwhacker for each team.

All were armed with *pacers* and Colt's revolvers, and each man had a horse along, Billy's being Sable Satan, still as good as the day he captured him, and a piece of equine property all envied the boy the possession of; in fact there were several of the men who swore they would yet have the horse.

"I guess not, pards; the boy caught that horse wild on the prairies, and the man that lays hands on him settles with me."

The speaker was J. B. Hickok, known to the

world as "Wild Bill," and upon that trail he and William F. Cody for the first time met.

Wild Bill was assistant wagon-master on that trip, and all knew him so well that the idea of possessing Sable Satan by unfair means was at once given up and Billy felt secure in his treasure, for such the horse was, as his equal for speed and bottom had not been found on the plains.

As an "extra hand" Billy had nothing to do while the bullwhackers kept in good health, and no Indians were met with, so became the hunter of the train, keeping it well supplied with fresh meats and wild fowl.

It was upon one of these hunts that Billy won the name of Buffalo Billy, though afterward it was shortened by dropping the *y* after proving himself the champion buffalo-killer on the plains.

Dismounting from Sable Satan to cut up an antelope he had shot, he was suddenly startled by seeing his horse bound away over the prairie.

Springing to his feet he at once discovered the cause, for over a distant roll of the prairie a herd of thousands of buffaloes were coming at terrific speed.

One chance of escape alone presented itself and that was a lone cottonwood tree standing some few hundred yards distant.

In all the prairie around not another tree was visible, and Billy had noticed this lone sentinel as he was creeping up for a shot at the antelope.

At full speed he rushed for the tree and hastily climbed it, securing a safe seat amid its branches, while yet the herd was some distance away.

But glancing back over the huge drove to his horse he beheld a band of mounted warriors in full chase.

The center of the herd was headed directly for the tree, and the Indians were so following that they must come directly under it.

If discovered Billy knew well what his fate would be. The Indians would give up buffalo meat for a human scalp.

These thoughts flashed through the boy's mind, and he at once decided what he would do.

To remain, was certain death at the hands of the red-skins.

To leave, as he intended, by the means of a buffalo was a fearful risk.

But he would take it; and accordingly strapped his rifle upon his back, picked out his buffalo, a huge bull, and swinging quickly from a limb, watched his chance and dropped down upon the back of his choice.

Clutching the long, shaggy mane he clung for dear life, at the same time holding himself on with his spurs.

Maddened with fright the bull bounded into

the air, snorted wildly, gored those in the advance and soon led the herd.

Billy kept his seat nobly, a grim smile upon his face, and occasionally glanced backward at the herd and the pursuing Indians.

And straight for camp went the herd, until discovered by the train men, who started out in force to head them off.

But pell-mell into camp they went, stampeding the oxen and horses and frightening the men, and Billy began to feel that he must keep on his racer clear to the hills.

But the animal was tired out now and had dropped to the rear of the herd, and Wild Bill, seeing his young friend, raised his rifle and dropped the buffalo bull just as he was running out of camp.

From that day the boy was known as Buffalo Billy.

CHAPTER X.

CAPTURED BY DANITES.

WITH the usual adventures incident to a trip across the plains, an occasional fight with Indians, and several grand hunts, the train at last arrived near Green River in the Rocky Mountains.

Billy, Lew Simpson and another of the train had dropped back during the afternoon for a hunt, and upon drawing near the place where they were to encamp, were surprised to discover a band of horsemen coming toward them, whom they observed, however, to be white men.

Suspecting no harm from those of their own race, they rode forward, and, as they met, were startled to hear:

"Up with your hands! You are dead men if you resist!"

"Who are you?" asked Lew Simpson, angrily.

"Joe Smith, the Danite," was the calm reply of that leader.

"If I had known you were that accursed scoundrel I'd have shot you," growled Lew Simpson.

"Am awful glad you did not know it; but come, you are my prisoners, and your train is in my power," was the reply, and upon arriving at camp they found that it was but too true, for the boys had not suspected danger from men they had believed a party of United States cavalry.

The Danite leader, Joe Smith, then ordered all that could be packed on horses to be taken and the wagons set on fire, and told the train men to set out on foot for Fort Bridger, saying:

"You can reach there, but I guess Albert Sydney Johnson and his troops will never get the supplies."

The train was burned, all but one wagon, which carried supplies for the men, and armed only with their revolvers, they were ordered away by the Danites.

But Buffalo Billy was not one to see his splendid horse go without remonstrance, and, as begging did no good, offered to take him upon any terms he could get him on.

"Boy, ain't you the one who killed Hugh Hall in Kansas some time ago?" asked the man who had Billy's horse.

"I am."

"Well, I owe you one, for he was my pard, and you got me run out of the country by your work, so I'm willing to be even by keeping your horse."

"I'll fight you for him," said Billy, fiercely.

"What with, boy, fists or knives?"

"You are a fool to talk that way, for you weigh double what I do; but I'll fight you for the horse with rifle or pistol."

The train men tried to dissuade Billy from this determination, for they saw the Danite was anxious to take him at his word, and to kill him; but he had made the offer and the Mormon urged it on, and the arrangements were made to fight with pistols at fifty paces, walking on each other and firing until one fell.

They at once took their stands and Joe Smith gave the word, saying in a low tone before doing so:

"He's a boy in years; but he must be got rid of."

At the word the Danite advanced at a rapid walk firing; but Buffalo Billy stood still, and waited until he had received four shots, all coming dangerously near, when he suddenly threw his revolver to a level and drew trigger.

At the flash the man fell, shot in the leg, and the duel ended.

But the Danites would not give up the horse, saying that a wounded man could not continue the fight, and as Billy had not killed his foe, the animal could not be claimed by them.

Wild Bill and Lew Simpson roundly cursed Joe Smith and his Danites for a set of thieves, while Billy said sadly:

"Good-by, Sable, old fellow, good-by."

As he spoke he went up to his splendid horse, that stood saddled near, and throwing himself upon his back, with a defiant yell, bounded away like an arrow from the bow.

The Danites opened a perfect fusilade of pistol-shots upon the boy, but they flew harmlessly by him, and a number mounted and gave pursuit in hot haste.

But Sable Satan left them far behind and they gave up the chase, while Billy hung about until the train-men came along, and joined them, receiving from one and all the highest praise for his daring escape.

Some days after the disconsolate train-men reached Fort Bridger, to find that other trains than theirs had been robbed by the Danites.

CHAPTER XI.

A HOT INDIAN FIGHT.

As it was late in the fall Lew Simpson and his men were compelled to winter at the fort, where there were a number of troops and train employees of Russell, Majors and Waddell, who were formed into military companies, officered by wagon-masters.

As Wild Bill was placed in command of the battalion of train-men, he made Buffalo Billy an *aide-de-camp* and the boy devoted himself assiduously to the duties devolving upon him, and before the long and tedious winter passed was forced to experience hardships of the severest kind, as the garrison had to live on mule meat, and haul wood from the distant mountains themselves, their animals having been served up as food.

In the spring Simpson started east with a train, and Buffalo Bill accompanied him as hunter for the men, his well known marksmanship and skill in securing game readily getting for him that position.

One day Lew Simpson and an "extra hand" accompanied him on one of his hunting expeditions, and to their surprise they came upon a band of Indians coming out of a canyon not far from them.

They were out on the prairie, and knowing that they could not escape on their mules, Simpson and the extra told Billy to ride off on Sable Satan and save himself.

But this the boy would not do, saying that he would remain with them.

"Then your horse must go with our mules," said Simpson.

"All right, Lew," said Billy, though the tears came into his eyes.

Telling them to dismount, just as they came to a buffalo wallow, Lew Simpson said:

"Now, give 'em a shot just back of the ears."

The shots were fired, Billy shutting his eyes as he pulled the trigger, and Sable Satan and the two mules dropped dead in their tracks.

In an instant they were dragged into position, so as to form a triangular fort, and getting into the wallow, with their knives the three threw up the dirt as rapidly as possible to make their position safer.

By this time the Indians, some half hundred in number, were rushing upon them with wildest yells.

But crouching down in their little fort of flesh and dirt, Lew Simpson and his man and boy comrade leveled their rifles over the bodies of the slain animals, and, as the howling red-skins came within sixty yards, fired together.

Down went three Indians, and while Lew Simpson reloaded the yagers Billy and George Woods fired with their revolvers with such

right good will the Indians were checked in their advance and turned to retreat out of range, followed by three more shots from the yagers.

Five Indians and four ponies were the result of this fight, and it gave the holders of the triangular fort confidence in themselves.

But the Indians did not give up the attack, but circled around and around the fort, firing upon the defenders with their arrows, and slightly wounding all three of them, while the bodies of the mules and horse were literally filled with shafts.

After a few rides around their pale-face foes, the Indians suddenly charged again, coming from every quarter, and forcing the whites to each defend the space in his front.

With demoniacal yells they came on once more, and once more the yagers opened, and then were thrown aside for the rapidly firing revolvers which did fearful execution.

Glancing toward Billy Lew Simpson saw that he was perfectly cool and had a revolver in each hand, although his shirt was saturated with blood from the arrow wound in his shoulder.

Unable to understand, or stand the hot fire of the revolvers, they again broke, when within twenty yards of the fort and rode off rapidly out of range.

"You got three that time, Billy," cried Lew Simpson gleefully, as he saw a trio of red-skins scattered along in the front of the boy.

Billy smiled grimly and reloaded his weapons, after which Lew Simpson dressed the wounds of his comrades, who returned a like favor for him.

But the Indians had by no means gone, for they had gone into camp in a circle around their foes, but well out of range of the fearful Mississippi yagers.

The three defenders in the meantime improved their opportunity to strengthen their fort with dirt and dig a deeper space within, while they also lunched upon their scanty supply of food.

"They'll starve us out if they can't take us by charging," said Simpson.

"They can't starve me as long as your mule holds out, Lew, for I won't eat poor Sable; it would choke me," replied Billy.

"Well, mule meat's good," said Woods.

"Yes, when there ain't anything else to eat, but I prefer buff'ler or Injun," was Billy's response.

"We may have to eat Injun yet," laughed Lew Simpson.

All made a wry face at this supposition and again prepared to meet a charge, for the red-skins were coming down in column.

But again they were checked with loss, and Billy's shot brought down the chief.

Darkness coming on, the Indians formed in

line as though to ride away, when Lew Simpson said:

"They must take us for durned fools not to know that they won't leave their dead unburied, and that they think they can draw us out. No, here is where we live until the boys from the train come to look us up."

During the night the Indians, finding their foes would not leave their fort, set the grass on fire to burn them out.

But it was too scanty to burn well and only made a smoke, under cover of which they once more advanced, to be once more driven back.

With the morning they showed that their intention was to starve them out for they went into a regular camp in a circle upon the prairie.

But during the afternoon a party of horsemen appeared in sight, and the three hungry, suffering, half-starved defenders gave a yell of delight, which the red-skins answered with howls of disappointed rage as they hastily mounted their ponies and fled.

The train-men soon came up and were wild in their enthusiasm over the brave defense made, while the fort came in for general praise, although one and all deeply regretted Sable Satan's sad end, though his death had served a good purpose.

CHAPTER XII.

BOY TRAPPERS' ADVENTURES.

It was a proud day for Buffalo Billy when he returned home and was welcomed by his mother and sisters, to whom he gave all of his earnings, which were considerable, as his pay had been liberal.

The neighborhood, hearing from members of the train of Billy's exploits, for he was very close-mouthed about what he had done, made a hero of him, and many a pretty girl of seventeen regretted that the boy was not a man grown, to have him for a lover.

But Billy's restless nature would not allow him to remain idle at home, so he joined a party of trappers who were going to trap the streams of the Laramie and Chugwater for otter, beaver and other animals possessing valuable fur, as well as to shoot wolves for their pelts.

This expedition did not prove very profitable, and not wishing to return home without enough furs to bring a fair sum, Buffalo Billy joined a young man, only a few years his senior, by the name of Dave Harrington, and the two started off for the Republican.

Their outfit consisted of a wagon and yoke of oxen, for the transportation of their supplies and pelts, and they began trapping in the vicinity of Junction City, Kansas, and went up the Republican to Prairie Dog creek, where they found plenty of beaver.

While catching a large number of beavers, o

day they returned to camp to find one of their oxen had fallen over a precipice and killed himself, and they were left without a team.

But the Boy Trappers, for Dave Harrington was not eighteen, determined to trap on through the winter, and in the spring one of them would go for a team to haul back their wagon.

Ill fortune seemed however to dog their steps as trappers, for one day, while chasing elk, Buffalo Billy fell and broke his leg, and Dave Harrington had to carry him to camp.

Here was a sad predicament, for the nearest settlement was one hundred miles distant.

But Dave set the leg as skillfully as he could, built a "dug-out," for the wounded boy to live in, filled it with wood and provisions, and then set out to procure a yoke of oxen and sled to return for Billy and their pelts.

The "dug-out," was a hole in the side of a bank, covered with poles, grass and sod, and with a fire-place in one end, and a bunk near it, was by no means uncomfortable; but the prospect of remaining there for a month alone, for it would take Harrington that time to go and return through the deep snow, was by no means a pleasant prospect for a boy under fourteen, and with a broken leg.

Dave started the following morning on foot, and Billy was left alone, helpless, and in the solitude of the mountain wilds.

To throw wood on the fire was a painful effort for him, and to move so as to cook his food was torture, and boys of his age can well feel for him in distress and loneliness.

But Buffalo Billy was made of stern stuff, and knew not what fear was; but who can picture the thoughts that were constantly in his young brain, when the winds were sweeping through the pines at night, the wolves were howling about his door, and the sleet and snow was almost continually falling.

It were enough to drive a strong man mad, let alone a boy.

But he stood it bravely, each day however counting with longing heart the hours that went so slowly by, and hoping for his comrade's return.

"Perhaps he has been frozen to death."

That was his thought one day about Harrington.

The next it was:

"I wonder if he has not lost his way?"

Again it was:

"I fear the Indians may have killed him."

When Dave had been gone about two weeks, Buffalo Billy was startled one day from a sound nap, to see an Indian standing by his side.

He was in full war-paint and feathers, which showed he was on the war-path, and Billy felt that it was all over with him.

Speaking to him in Sioux, which the boy understood, he asked:

"What pale-face boy do here?"

"My leg is broken."

"What for come here?"

"To get furs."

"This red-skin country?"

This laconic assertion Billy could not contradict, so he wisely held his peace.

"Let see leg," came next.

Billy showed him the bandaged limb, which was broken between the knee and ankle.

Just then another Indian entered whom Billy recognized, as having seen before, and whom he knew to be the great Sioux Chief, Rain-in-the-Face.

Billy called him by name, and he kept back the warriors, who were about to end the boy's life then and there.

"Boy pale-face know chief?" asked Rain-in-the-Face.

"Yes, I saw you at Fort Laramie, and gave you a knife," said Billy with hope in his heart.

"Ugh! chief don't forget; have knife here," and he showed a knife which he had doubtless often used upon the scalps of pale-faces.

"What pale-face boy do here?"

Billy told him.

"Where friend?"

"Gone after team."

"When come back?"

Billy was afraid to tell him the truth, so said:

"In two moons."

"Long time."

"Yes; but do your young men intend to kill me?"

"Me have talk and see."

The Indians then held a council together, and Billy could see that the chances were against him; but old Rain-in-the-Face triumphed in the end, and said:

"As pale-face boy is only pappoose, my young men not kill him."

Billy had often longed to be a man; but now he was happy that he was a boy, and answered:

"Yes, I am only a little pappoose."

"Him heap bad pappoose, me remember," said Rain-in-the-Face, recalling some of the jokes the boy played at Fort Laramie.

The Indians then unsaddled their ponies and camped at the dug-out for two days, and when they left they carried with them the sugar and coffee, Billy's rifle and one revolver, and most of the ammunition, besides what cooking utensils they needed.

Then old Rain-in-the-Face bade the boy good-by, and they rode off without poor Billy's blessing following them.

Hardly had they gone before a severe snow-storm sprung up, and it was hard indeed for the crippled boy to get wood enough to build a fire, for the red-skins had put it out before leaving.

The wolves, seemingly understanding how

helpless the boy was, scratched at the door, and ran over the roof of the dug-out, at the same time howling viciously; but Billy frightened them off with an occasional shot, and resigned himself to his lonely fate.

But at last a month passed away, and with its end appeared brave Dave Harrington.

He had passed through innumerable dangers, but had at last come back in safety, and brought with him an ox-team.

Never in his life had Buffalo Billy felt the joy of that moment, and, though not a boy given to showing his feelings, he burst into tears of delight.

As it was impossible to at once return, on account of the very great depth of the snow, Dave told Billy they would wait until spring, as he had plenty of provisions, and that fur animals were plenty.

As soon as the snow began to melt Dave got his traps in, collected his pelts, which numbered a thousand, and putting them on the wagon, so as to serve as a bed for Billy, started his oxen homeward.

After twelve days they reached the ranch where Dave had purchased the oxen, paid in furs for the team, and started on to Junction City. Arriving there they sold their team, wagon and furs, the latter bringing them about two hundred and fifty dollars, a handsome sum for each when divided, and which made Billy's heart glad to take home with him, for it paid off a mortgage on his mother's farm.

CHAPTER X'II.

BUFFALO BILLY STRIKES IT RICH.

It was months before Billy obtained perfect use of his broken leg and was able to throw his crutches aside; but when he did do so it was with a glad heart, for once more he longed to be upon the plains.

Hearing of a rich discovery of gold in Colorado, he joined a party of miners that were bound there, and, reaching the mining camps, staked out a claim and began work.

He was the youngest person in the mines, in fact the only boy there, and with many he was a great favorite; but there were a few men there who sought to impose upon him on account of his youth.

This treatment Buffalo Billy was not the person to stand, and the result was one of his foes struck him one night without the slightest cause.

The result was a general row, for Billy's friends at once backed him in resenting the blow, and, though the fracas lasted but a few minutes, there were several burials next day as the result.

Of course this made Billy more disliked by

those who, without reason, had become his foes, and to add to their dislike, he one day struck a rich vein that promised to pan out well in ore.

A few days he toiled in his lead, laying up considerable sums by his work, and one morning, as he went to his mine, he found it occupied by two rough-looking men whom he did not remember to have ever seen before.

"Well, pards, I guess you're up the wrong tree," he said, pleasantly.

"I guesses not; this are our lead," said one, rudely.

"How do you make that out?"

"We staked it months ago, and was called away, and now we has returned to it."

"Well, I believe you both to be lying, and until you prove it's your claim you can't have it," was the bold reply.

"Who's goin' ter say no?"

"I am."

"You!"

"Yes."

"Who is you?"

"I am named William Frederick Cody."

"You has handle enough."

"I have more than that."

"Waal."

"I'm called Buffalo Billy."

"We has heer'd o' you as a chap as has too much cheek fer one so young."

"Then if you know me you will understand that though I am but a boy I won't let you walk away with my claim."

"Get out, boy."

Billy obeyed; that is he went down to the camps and consulted his friends about what was best for him to do.

"We'll go up and call in their chips, Billy," was the universal decision.

"No, let us find out if the claim is theirs," said Billy.

"Find out nothin'; they has no right to it and 'tain't justice."

So up to the mine they went, and Billy's friends recognized the two claimants of the mine as two worthless fellows who had been in the valley months before, but who had no claim upon the boy's property.

"You must git!"

That was the decision; but just then others came up who sided with the desperadoes and things looked very scary for awhile, for half the crowd swore that the mine had belonged to the two claimants to it and that Billy ought to give it up.

But these were the men who disliked Billy and his party, as they were the honest miners, and who were willing to side with his foes.

"Ef ther boy wants ther mine he will hev to fight fer it," said one.

"He will fight for it and so will we!" cried one of Billy's friends.

All this time Billy had remained silent; but now he saw that his friends were in deadly earnest, and to prevent a general fight and much loss of life he said:

"The mine I own legally and I'll fight for it if that will settle it, but I don't want to have to fight both of you."

"Oh, but you must though," said one.

"If I must, I'll do it."

"But you shall not, Billy. These two devils only want to murder you so they can get the mine, and they sha'n't do it."

This was said by Billy's best pard and the others who liked the boy backed him up in his words, and pistols were drawn on both sides and the slightest act now all knew would cause trouble.

"If they'll fight me with revolvers and separately I'll be willing," said Billy, hastily, anxious to avert the trouble.

"Waal, we'll do that, so sail in," said one.

"No, not this way, you accursed coward, but go off there, stand with your back to the boy, as he will to you, and twenty paces apart, and at a word wheel and fire," cried Billy's friend.

This seemed fair and all agreed to it, and the man and the boy were placed in position, Billy pale but calm.

The other side won the word to wheel and fire, and though the man tried to aid his friend in giving it, Buffalo Billy was too quick for him and fired a second in advance of his adversary.

But that second was enough, for the bullet went straight to the heart of the one at which it was aimed, while his shot flew wild.

A yell burst from Billy's friends as they rushed forward while his foes were bringing up their other man.

But just then a stranger rode up, and leveling a pistol at the second claimant for the mine said sternly:

"Dick Malone, my gallows-bird, I arrest you in the name of the law."

The stranger was a United States detective, and the one he arrested an escaped convict.

This ended the fight for the mine; but after a few days' longer work in it Billy found that the vein panned out badly, and selling out his interest in it returned to his home once more, convinced that mining was not his forte, though he certainly had dug out enough of the yellow ore to prove to his mother that he had not been idle.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE YOUNG GUIDE.

THE next time that Buffalo Billy left home it was in the capacity of assistant guide to a train of emigrants that were going to the far West to settle.

In Leavenworth one night he met in a common assembling room for all classes of men, a man who was Train Boss, or captain, and who was going to the West to raise cattle and also to farm.

His train, consisting of some thirty families, was encamped out of town resting and fitting up for the renewal of the march, and he had come into Leavenworth to secure a competent guide, the one who had been acting as such having been taken very ill.

He had just secured the services of a young man who professed to know the country well though he was a stranger in Leavenworth, and fearing an accident might deprive him of his services too, the captain was looking around for an assistant when he came upon Billy.

He liked the boy from the first, but feared, on account of his youth, that he might not be competent for the position, until assured by several teamsters that he was fully so, and consequently he engaged Billy at a fair salary.

The chief guide, who called himself Roy Velvet, Billy had never met, until the morning the train rolled out of camp on its way westward, and from the very first he did not like him.

He was a handsome, but dissipated looking young man dressed, like a dandy, was more than thoroughly armed, and rode a superb bay mare.

He smiled when Captain Luke Denham, the Train Boss, introduced Billy as an assistant guide, and said sneeringly:

"I guess he won't be of much use ten miles away from Leavenworth, captain."

Billy made no reply, but kept up considerable thinking, and set to work at his duties.

For some days the train went on finely, and all felt the new guide knew his business; but then there came some stormy days, it was hard traveling, several times the train had to make a dry camp, and once they were attacked by Indians, until some of the old teamsters felt confident that Roy Velvet had lost the way.

Yet on they plodded until at last the nature of the country was such that it was difficult for the train to travel, while, to add to their discomfort and fears, a large band of Indians were hovering near them.

"Well, Velvet, where will you find a camping place to-night?" asked Captain Denham, riding forward and joining the guide.

"Oh! I'll find a good place, and only a short distance ahead; after that the country will be all right for traveling," was the quiet answer.

"I don't believe it, for it has not that look."

"Then ask the assistant guide," was the stern reply.

"I would, but he is not with the train, and has not been seen since last night."

"Perhaps he got out of sight of the train

and couldn't find his way back," sneered the guide.

"Oh no! that boy knows what he is about, and I'll trust him for it."

"Well, yonder is the camp," and Roy Velvet pointed to a little meadow not far distant, through which ran a deep stream, and beyond and overshadowing it, was a range of bold hills.

"It's a pleasant spot indeed, and I guess we'll halt a day or two," said the captain, and he gave orders for the train to encamp.

But suddenly up dashed Billy Cody, mounted upon a large horse no one had ever seen him ride before, and it was evident that he had been riding hard.

"Captain Denham, don't camp there, sir, for you place yourself at the mercy of the renegades and Indians that are dogging your trail," he said hastily.

"I am the guide, boy, and have selected the camp," sternly answered Roy Velvet.

"And you are my prisoner, Roy Velvet," and quicker than a flash the revolver of Buffalo Billy covered his heart.

Roy Velvet turned very pale, but said:

"Are you mad, boy?"

"No."

"Billy, what is the matter" asked Captain Denham, while the teamsters and settlers gathered quickly around.

"Tie that man and I will tell you."

"But, Billy—"

"Tie him, captain, or I shall shoot him, for I know who and what he is," cried Billy, and his manner, his charge against the chief guide, his mysterious absence from the train for eighteen hours, and his return upon a strange horse, proved to all that he did know something detrimental to Roy Velvet.

"Speak, Billy, and if you know aught against this man, tell us," said the captain.

"Disarm him then for he is a tricky devil."

"Captain Denham, will you permit that boy to cover me with his revolver and hurl insult upon me?" cried the guide.

"As you will not do as I ask I will do it myself," and Billy rode up to the guide, still holding his cocked revolver upon him, and deliberately took from his belt his revolvers and knife.

"You are so sly, so soft in your cunning, Velvet, that I'll be on the safe side," said Billy with a smile, as he felt over the man for another weapon.

"Ah! I'll take this Derringer from your breast pocket," and out he drew the concealed weapon.

"Now, captain, I'll introduce to you Red Reid, the Renegade Chief."

All were astonished at this charge made by Billy against the guide, for Red Reid was one of the vilest road-agents that infested the over-

land trails to the West, and had robbed and murdered many a train of emigrants, and of Government supplies.

He was known also to be in league with the red-skins, and had them for allies, when his own force of renegades was not large enough to make a successful attack.

"He lies! I am not that monster," shouted the guide as white as a corpse.

"I do not lie, sir; from the first I did not like you, and knowing that you were going off the regular trail west I watched you.

"I have seen you, at night, slip out of camp and meet Indians, and last night I followed the one you met.

"I overtook him on the prairies, after a hard chase, and he shot my horse; but I shot him and I found he was a white man in Indian disguise, and more, before he died he recognized me, for he was once my father's friend, but went to the bad.

"He told me who and what you were, and when he died to-day I mounted his horse and came on after the train, for I knew you were going to lead them here to attack this very night with your band that is not far away."

The story of Billy made a deep impression upon the train people, and the result was that Roy Velvet was seized, bound, and hanged to a tree within fifteen minutes, and the boy who had saved them from death was made chief guide.

At once he led them out of the dangerous locality where they could be ambushed and attacked, and the truth of the charge against Roy Velvet was sustained by the attack of the supposed Indians upon their camp; for, when driven off and the dead examined, a number of white men were found in the red paint and dress of Indian warriors.

Without difficulty Buffalo Billy led the train on to its destination, proving himself thereby a perfect guide, and after a short stop in the new settlement, he returned with a Government train bound East, and again was warmly welcomed "home again."

CHAPTER XV.

THE PONY EXPRESS RIDER.

ONE day when he had ridden into Leavenworth Buffalo Billy met his old friend, Wild Bill, who was fitting out a train with supplies for the Overland Stage Company, and he was at once persuaded to join him in the trip West going as assistant wagon-master.

Putting a man on his mother's farm to take care of it, for as a farmer Billy was not a success, he bade his mother and sisters farewell and once more was on his way toward the land of the setting sun.

Having been at home for several months, for his mother not being in the enjoyment of good health he hated to leave her, Billy had been attending school, and had been a hard student, while in the eyes of his fellow pupils, girls and boys alike, he was a hero of heroes.

On his trip West with Wild Bill he had carried his books, and often in camp he had whiled away the time in studying, until he was asked if he was reading for a lawyer or a preacher.

But when well away from civilization his books were cast aside for his rifle, and he was constantly in the saddle supplying the train with game.

Without any particular adventures the train arrived in due season at Atchison, and there so much was said about Pony Riding on the Overland that Buffalo Billy decided to volunteer as a rider.

Resigning his position with the train, Mr. Russell gave him a warm letter to Alf Slade, a noted personage on the frontier, and to him Billy went.

Slade was then stage agent for the Julesberg and Rocky Ridge Division, with his headquarters at Horseshoe, nearly forty miles west of Fort Laramie, and there Billy found him and presented his letter.

Slade read the letter, looked Billy carefully over, and said:

"I would like to oblige you, my boy, but you are too young, the work kills strong men in a short time."

"Give me a trial, sir, please, for I think I can pull through," said Billy.

"But are you used to hard riding and a life of danger?"

"Yes, sir, I've seen hard work, young as I am."

"I see now that Russell says you are Buffalo Billy," and Slade glanced again at the letter.

"Yes, sir, that's what my pards call me."

"I have heard of you, and you can become a pony rider; if you break down you can give it up."

The very next day Billy was set to work on the trail from Red Buttes on the North Platte, to Three Crossings on the Sweet Water, a distance of seventy-six miles.

It was a very long piece of road, but Billy did not weaken, and ere long became known as the Boss Pony Rider.

One day he arrived at the end of his road to find that the rider who should have gone out on the trip with his mail, had been killed in a fight, so he at once volunteered for the run to Rocky Ridge, a distance of eighty-five miles, and arrived at the station even ahead of time.

Without rest he turned back and reached Red Buttes on time, making the extraordinary

run of *three hundred and twenty-two* miles without rest, and at an average speed of fifteen miles an hour.

This remarkable feat won for him a presentation of a purse of gold from the company, and a fame for pluck and endurance that placed him as the chief of the Pony Riders.

CHAPTER XVI

A RIDE FOR LIFE.

ONE day, after Buffalo Billy had been a few months Pony Riding, a party of Indians ambushed him near Horse Creek.

He however, as did his horse, miraculously escaped their foes, dashed through them and went on like the wind.

But the red-skins gave hot chase, firing as they ran, yet still without effect.

Billy was well mounted and had not felt fear of them until he saw two of the Indians rapidly drawing ahead of the other, and gaining upon him.

He urged his horse on at full speed with lash and spur, but still the red-skins gained.

Then he saw that they too were splendidly mounted, not on ponies, but large American horses which they had doubtlessly captured from the cavalry.

Nearer and nearer came the Indians, and on Billy pressed at full speed.

Throwing a glance over his shoulder he saw that one of the red-skins, whose feathers proved him to be a chief, was gaining on his comrade, and yet seemed not to be urging the large roan he rode.

"I want that horse, and I want that Injun," muttered Billy, and he quietly took his revolver from his belt.

Nearer and nearer came the chief, and Billy felt his own horse wavering, and knew he was forced beyond his powers of endurance, and fearing he might fall with him, determined to act at once.

Dragging the animal he rode to a sudden halt, and reining him back upon his haunches, he suddenly wheeled in his saddle and fired.

The Indian saw his sudden and unexpected movement, and was taken so wholly off his guard that he had no time to fire, and ere he could raise his pistol, a bullet went crashing through his brain.

He fell back on his horse, that dashed straight on, and was then thrown to the ground, while the rein of the animal was seized by Billy with a force that checked his mad flight.

It was an easy thing for the Pony Rider to spring upon the back of the roan and get away; but he would not give up his own saddle and the mail bags which were attached to it, and, dismounting, he was hastily making the

transfer from his own to the red skin's horse when up dashed the second Indian, and firing as he came, sent a bullet through the cap of the youth, knocking it from his head.

The two horses he held began to both pull back in alarm, and for an instant things looked very dismal for the brave Pony Rider; but a second shot from the warrior missed the boy and killed his horse, and this relieved him of that trouble, and instantly he drew his revolver and fired.

Down from his horse fell the red-skin, but only wounded, and as he still clutched his pistol, Billy was forced to give him another shot, which quieted him forever, just as the band of Indians came in sight.

But the presence of mind for which he was noted did not desert the Pony Rider, and he quickly cut loose his saddle from his dead horse, sprung with it in his hand upon the back of the roan and dashed away once more just as the shots of his foes began to patter around him.

The Indians, however, kept the chase up, and Billy dashed up to the station to find that the stock-tender lay dead and scalped in front of his cabin and the stock had been driven off.

But without an instant's delay the Pony Rider urged the splendid roan he had captured on once more and arrived in safety at Plontz Station *ahead of time*, and made known what had happened back on the overland trail, and added new laurels to his name.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BOY STAGE DRIVER OF THE OVERLAND.

AFTER six months longer of Pony Riding over the dangerous trail of seventy-six miles, ridden by day and night in all kinds of weather, Buffalo Billy met with an adventure that was the cause of his again finding another occupation.

The Indians had become very troublesome as fall came on and a number of pony riders had been killed and stations burned along the route until there were few who cared to take the risks.

The stage coaches also were often attacked, and on one occasion the driver and two passengers were killed and several others were wounded.

But Billy did not flinch from his long, lonely and desperate rides, and seemed to even take pleasure in taking the fearful chances against death which he was forced to do on every ride out and in.

One day as he sped along like the wind he saw ahead of him the stage coach going at full speed and no one on the box.

At once he knew there was trouble, and as

he drew nearer he discovered a group of Indians dash out of a ravine and give chase.

As he heard the clatter of hoofs behind him he looked around and saw a set of skins coming in pursuit, and felt confident that he must have dashed by an ambush; they were preparing for him, by suddenly changing his course and riding around instead of through a canyon.

The stage coach was now in the open prairie, and dashing along the trail as fast as the horses could go, while the Indians in close pursuit numbered but three.

Billy was well mounted upon a sorrel mare, and urging her with the spur he soon came in range of the red-skin furthest in the rear and hastily fired.

Down went the pony, and the Indian was thrown with such violence that he was evidently stunned, as he lay where he had fallen.

Another shot wounded one of the remaining Indians, and they hastily sped away to the right oblique in flight, while Billy dashed on to the side of the coach.

There were five passengers within, and two of them were women, and all were terribly frightened, though evidently not knowing that their driver lay dead upon the box, the reins still grasped in his nerveless hands.

Riding near, Billy seized his mail bags and dextrously got from his saddle to the stage, and the next instant he held the reins in his firm gripe.

He knew well that Ted Remus, the driver, had carried out a box of gold, and was determined to save it for the company if in his power.

His horse, relieved of his weight and trained to run the trail, kept right on ahead, and he, skillfully handling the reins, for he was a fine driver, drove on at the topmost speed of the six animals drawing the coach.

Behind him came the Indians, steadily gaining; but Billy plied the silk in a style that made his team fairly fly, and they soon reached the hills.

Here the red-skins again gained, for the road was not good and in many places very dangerous.

But once over the ridge, and just as the Indians were near enough to fill the back of the coach with arrows, Billy made his team jump ahead once more, and at breakneck speed they rushed down the steep road, the vehicle swaying wildly, and the passengers within not knowing whether they would be dashed to pieces, or scalped by the Indians, or which death would be the most to be desired.

But Billy, in spite of his lightning driving, managed his team well, and after a fierce run of half an hour rolled up to the door of the station in a style that made the agent and the lookers on stare.

But he saved the box and the lives of the passengers, and several days after was transferred from the Pony Rider line to stage driving on the Overland, a position he seemed to like.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CLEVER DISGUISE.

WHILE riding Pony Express the road on Buffalo Billy's run became infested with road-agents, who were wont to halt every rider they could catch, and also rob the stages.

The chief of these outlaws was noted as a man of gallantry, for he never robbed a woman, no matter what the value of her personal effects might be.

Ladies with valuable diamonds in their ears, and rings that were worth a small fortune, were always spared by this man, who became known by his forbearance to the fair sex as the "Cavalier."

Poor men were also exempt from being robbed by the Cavalier; that is if he really thought a man was poor and not "playing possum," to get off from paying the toll demanded.

In halting a stage the driver was never robbed, but Government and the Company's moneys were always taken, and well-to-do travelers had to pay liberally.

Pony Express Riders were never robbed of their pocket money, but the mail was invariably searched for money.

Once only had Buffalo Billy been halted by the Cavalier, though the other riders had frequently been brought to a halt and made to pony up.

That once Billy had shown fight, had tried to run by, and his horse had been shot; but he slightly wounded the Cavalier in the arm, and for it he was told if he ever attempted resistance again he would be promptly killed.

This did not trouble the young Rider in the least, but he made up his mind that he would not be caught; and after that the road-agents found it impossible to bring him to a halt, and his mails always went through in perfect safety.

At last it became rumored that Buffalo Billy had been removed to another part of the road, and that as no riders could be found to take his long night rides, a daughter of one of the stock-tenders had volunteered for it, and the company, knowing her ability as a rider, accepted her services until another could be found.

The first night on the run she arrived at the other end on time, though she reported that she had been halted by the Cavalier and four of his men.

The road-agent seemed greatly surprised that a woman, in fact a young and very

pretty girl, should be riding the road, but she made known the circumstances, and he told her she should always go through unmolested by him and his men.

But he made the mails, carried by the other riders, and the stage-coach passengers, suffer for his leniency to the Girl Rider, and the Government and both the express and stage companies offered a large reward for the capture of himself and men alive.

This seemed to do no good, although a number of attempts were made to capture him, which signally failed, and the reward was increased and added "dead or alive."

All this time the Girl Rider often met the Cavalier in her rides, and when the moonlight nights came on, he would often, as she was flying along, dash out from some thicket, and ride with her ten or fifteen miles.

The more he saw of her the more he seemed to admire her, and his times of joining her increased, and he seemed to so enjoy his rides with her, that he would, when she went into a station to change horses, make a circuit around it, and joining her beyond, continue on for another dozen miles, for he rode a fleet steed, and one of great bottom.

One night as they thus sped along he told the Girl Pony Rider that he had learned to love her, tho' he had never seen her face in the daylight, and that he had accumulated a large sum, for he had a treasure hiding-place in the mountains, and, if she only would love him in return and fly with him, he would be the happiest of men, and give up his evil life.

The maiden promised to think of it, said it was so sudden and unexpected, that she had never loved before, and did not even then know her own heart, and with this she dashed on her way like the wind.

The next night the Cavalier again met her, and again renewed his vows of love, and she told him she had thought of it, and would stand by him until death parted them.

The Cavalier went into ecstasies over this, and an evening was appointed when they should leave the country together, which was a night on which the Girl Rider knew she was to carry quite a sum of money in huge bills to the paymaster of the company at the other end of the line.

The night in question came round, and the cavalier road-agent, as he had promised, had relays of fresh horses every twenty miles until they should have gone two hundred, which would put them beyond pursuit; in fact the company would not discover for twenty-four hours just what had happened, the outlaw and maiden both believed, so considered themselves safe.

At the hour he had agreed to meet the maiden, the Cavalier was on hand at the timber, mounted on his finest horse, dressed in his

best, and carrying a couple of large saddle-bags loaded with treasure, consisting of his lion's share of the robberies, and which included watches, jewelry, gold, silver and paper money.

The maiden asked him to dismount and arrange her saddle-girths, and as he was stooping, she threw down the rein of his horse which she was holding, and to which she had attached something, and away he started in a run, for the violent motion had frightened him; but he soon came to a halt.

Rising to his feet the Cavalier suddenly felt the cold muzzle of a revolver pressed against his head, and heard the words:

"You are my prisoner; resist and I will kill you; up with your arms!"

He tried to laugh it off as a joke, but she was in deadly earnest, and he soon found it out.

Leaning over she took the weapons of the road-agent from his belt, and told him to move on ahead.

He could but obey, for he knew she would kill him if he did not.

A mile up the trail and the stock-tender's station came in sight, and in the moonlight they both saw a crowd of men awaiting them there.

Once more the Cavalier begged for his release; but she was determined, and marched him straight up to the crowd.

"Well, Billy, you've got him," cried a voice as they approached.

"I most certainly have, and if you'll look after him I'll go and fetch his horse, for I've got a hook fastened to his rein and he can't go far."

"Billy!" cried the road-agent.

"Yes, I am Buffalo Billy, and I assumed this disguise to catch you and I've done it."

"Do you love me now, pard?"

The road-agent foamed and swore; but it was no use; he had been caught, was taken to the town, tried, found guilty of murdering and robbing and ended his life on the gallows, and Buffalo Billy got the reward for his capture, and a medal from the company, and he certainly deserved all that he received for his daring exploit in the guise of a young girl, and a pretty one too, the boys said he made, for he had no mustache then, his complexion was perfect, though bronzed, and his waist was as small as a woman's, while in the saddle his hight did not show.

As to the Cavalier, Billy said he deserved his name, and certainly talked love like an adept at the art, and his lovemaking, like many another man's, led him to ruin and death.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DESPERADOES' DEN.

SHORTLY after this adventure of the rescue of the stage coach, the Indians became so bad along the line that the Pony Express and stages had to be stopped for awhile on account of the large number of horses run off.

This caused a number of the employees of the Overland to be idle, and they at once formed a company to go in search of the missing stock, and also to punish the red skins.

Of this company Wild Bill, who had been driving stage, was elected the commander, and, as they were all a brave set of men, it was expected they would render a good account of themselves.

Of course Buffalo Billy went along, by years the youngest of the party, but second to none for courage and skill in prairie craft.

They first struck the Indians in force on the Overland trail, and defeating them with heavy loss, pursued them to the Powder River, and then down that stream to the vicinity of where old Fort Reno now stands.

Pushing them hard the whites had several engagements with them, and each one of the company performed some deed of valor, but none were more conspicuous for daring deeds than was Buffalo Billy.

Permitting them no rest the whites drove the Indians into their village, and although they were outnumbered four to one, captured all of the company's stock as well as the ponies of the red skins.

Having been so successful Wild Bill gave the order to return, and the Indians had been too badly worsted to follow, and they reached Sweetwater Bridge in safety, and without the loss of an animal they had retaken or captured.

The stages and Pony Express at once began to run again on time, and Buffalo Billy was transferred to another part of the line, to drive through a mountainous district.

But anxious to return home, after his long absence, he resigned his position, determined to take advantage of a train going east, and in which he could get a position as assistant baggage-master on the homeward-bound trip, which would pay him for a couple of months' service, thereby giving him a larger sum to carry to his family.

As it would be several days before the train started, Buffalo Billy determined to enjoy a bear-hunt, and mounting his favorite horse, the roan he had captured from the Indian chief, he set out for the foot-hills of Laramie Peak.

After a day of pleasure, in which he had shot considerable game, such as deer, antelope and sage hens, but not a bear, he camped for the night in a pretty nook upon one of the mountain streams.

Hardly had he fastened his roan and begun to build a fire, by which to cook his supper, when he was startled by the neigh of a horse up in the mountains.

Instantly he sprung to his horse, and, by his hand over his nostrils, prevented him from giving an answering whinny, while he stood in silence listening, for he knew that he might rather expect to see a foe there than a friend.

As the neigh was once more repeated, Buffalo Billy resaddled his horse, hitched him so that he could be easily unfastened, and, with his rifle started cautiously on foot up the stream.

He had not gone far when in a little glen he beheld nearly half a hundred horses grazing and lariatied out.

This was a surprise to him, and he was most cautious indeed, for he was convinced that they belonged to some prowling band of Indians.

Presently, up the mountain further, he caught sight of a sudden light, and his keen eye detected that a man's form had momentarily appeared and then all was darkness once more.

On he went in the direction of the light, going as noiselessly as a panther creeping upon its prey, until presently he dimly discovered the outline of a small cabin, built back against the precipitous side of an overhanging hill.

Hearing voices, and recognizing that they were white men, he stepped boldly forward and knocked at the door.

Instantly there followed a dead silence within, and again he knocked.

"Who is there?" asked a gruff voice.

"A pard."

"Come in, pard."

Billy obeyed.

But instantly he regretted it, for his eyes fell upon a dozen villainous-looking fellows, several of whom he recognized as having seen loafing at the Overland stations, and who were considered all that was bad.

"Who are you?" asked one who appeared to be the leader.

"I am Bill Cody, a stage driver on the Overland, and I came up here on a bear-hunt."

"You're a healthy 'looking stage driver, you are, when you are n'ing more than a boy."

"Yes, Bob, he tells ther truth, fer I hes seen him handle ther ribbons, and he does it prime too; he are the Pony Rider who they calls Buff'ler Billy," said another of the gang.

"Ther devil yer say: waal, I has heerd o' him as a greased terror, an' he looks it; but who's with yer, young pard?"

"I am alone."

"It hain't likely."

"But I am."

"Yer must be durned fond o' b'ar-meat ter come up here alone."

"I am."

"Waal, did yer get yer b'arf?"

"No."

"Whar's yer critter?"

"My horse is down the mountain."

"I'll go arter him," said one suspiciously; but Billy answered quickly:

"Oh, no, I'll not trouble you; but if I can leave my rifle here, I'll go after him."

"All right, pard; but I guesses two of us better go with yer fer comp'ny, as we loves ter be sociable."

Buffalo Billy well knew now that he was in a nest of horse-thieves and desperadoes; but he dared not show his suspicions, as he felt assured they would kill him without the slightest compunction.

So he said pleasantly:

"Well, come along, for it is pleasanter to have company, and I'll stay with you to-night if you'll let me."

"Oh, yes, we'll let yer stay, fer we is awful social in our notions. Here Ben, you and Tabor go with my young pard and bring his horse up to the corral."

The two assigned for this duty were the very worst looking of the band, as far as villainous faces went; but Buffalo Billy's quick brain had already formed a plan of escape, and he was determined to carry it out.

Down the hill they went until they came to the horse, and both eyed his fine points, as dimly seen in the darkness, with considerable pleasure, while one muttered:

"The Cap will be sure to fancy him."

"There is a string of game that might come in well for supper," said Billy, as he pointed to a dark object on the ground.

"They will, fer sure," was the eager answer, and the man stooped to pick up the game when Billy suddenly dealt him a blow that felled him to the earth.

At the same time he wheeled upon the other, who already had his hand upon his revolver, and before he could fire, his own finger touched the trigger, and the desperado fell.

Bounding into his saddle he turned his horse down the mountain side, just as the door of the cabin was thrown open and he saw the band streaming out from their den, alarmed by the shot.

In hot pursuit they rushed down the mountain side, and for a short while gained upon Billy, for he dared not urge his horse rapidly down the steep hillside.

But once in the valley and the roan bounded forward at a swift pace, and not a moment too soon, for the revolver shots began to rattle, and the bullets to fly uncomfortably near.

On, at a swift gait the roan went, and though of hoofs in chase, he w the speed of the

After a few miles' pursuit the desperadoes gave up the chase and returned toward the mountains, while Buffalo Billy urged the roan on, and a couple of hours before dawn he reached the station, roused the men, and in fifteen minutes two score horsemen were on the way to the mountains, led by the boy, though Alf Slade himself went in command of the company.

But though they found the dug-out, and the grave of the man Billy had killed, the birds had flown, leaving one of their number in his last resting place to mark the visit of the youth to the desperadoes' den.

CHAPTER XX.

A MAD RIDE.

BACK to his home in Kansas went Buffalo Billy, to cheer the heart of his mother and sisters by his presence, and win their admiration by his rapid growth into a handsome manly youth.

To please those who so dearly loved him he again attended school for a couple of months; but with the first wagon-train bound west he went as hunter, and arriving in the vicinity of the Overland again sought service as a stage-driver, and was gladly accepted and welcomed back.

He had been driving but a short time after his return, when he carried east on one trip a coach load of English tourists, whose baggage loaded down the stage.

Although he was driving at the average regulation speed, to make time at each station, the Englishmen were growling all the time at the slow pace they were going and urging Billy to push ahead.

Billy said nothing, other than that he was driving according to orders, and which was, by the way, by no means a slow gait, and then listened to their growling in silence, while they were anathematizing everything in America, as is often the case with foreigners who come to this country.

Billy heard their remarks about the "bloody 'eathen in Hamerica," "the greatness of hail things in Hingland," "slow horses," "bad drivers," and all such talk, and drove calmly on into Horsehoe.

There the horses were changed, and the six hitched to the coach were wild Pony Express animals that had been only partially broken in as a stage team, which Billy delighted in driving.

As they were being hitched up Buffalo Billy smiled grimly, and said:

"I'll show those gents that we know how to drive in this country," and those who knew him could see the twinkle of devilry in his

Buffalo Bill, from Boyhood to Manhood.

At last, the Englishmen, having dined, took their seats, Billy gave the order to let the animals go, and they started off at a rapid pace.

But Billy reined them down until they reached the top of the hill, and then, with a wild yell, that suddenly silenced the grumbling of the Englishmen, he let the six horses bound forward, while with utter recklessness he threw the reins upon their backs.

Frightened, maddened by the lash he laid upon them, they went down the mountain at a terrific speed, the coach swaying wildly to and fro, and the Englishmen nearly frightened out of their wits.

Glancing out of the windows and up at Billy they called to him to stop for the sake of Heaven.

But he only laughed, and tearing the large lamps from the coach threw them at the leaders, the blows, and the jingling of glass frightening them fearfully.

"For God's sake stop, driver!"

"He is mad!"

"We'll all be killed!"

"Stop! stop!"

Such was the chorus of cries that came from the coach, and in reply was heard the calm response:

"Don't get excited, gents; but sit still and see how we stage it in the Rocky Mountains."

Then, to add still greater terror to the flying team and the frightened passengers, Billy drew his revolver from his belt and began to fire it in the air.

As the station came in sight, the man on duty saw the mad speed of the horses and threw open the stable doors, and in they dashed dragging the stage after them, and tearing off the top, but not hurting Billy, who had crouched down low in the boot.

The passengers were not so lucky, however, for the sudden shock of halt sent them forward in a heap and the arm of one of them was broken, while the others were more or less bruised.

A canvas top was tacked on, the coach was run out, and a fresh team hitched up, and Billy sung out:

"All aboard, gents!"

But he went on with an empty coach, for the Englishmen preferred to wait over for another driver, and one of them was heard to remark that he would rather go in a hearse than in a stage with such a madman holding the reins.

But far and wide Billy's mad ride was laughed at, and he received no reprimand from the company, though he richly deserved it.

CHAPTER XXI

WINNING A REWARD.

DRIVING over the trail through the Rocky Mountains, the drivers were constantly annoyed by road-agents, whose daring robberies made it most dangerous for a coach to pass over the line.

If the driver did not obey their stern command: "Halt! up with your hands!" he was certain to be killed, and the passenger within who offered the slightest resistance to being robbed, was sure to have his life end just there.

So dangerous had it become to drive the mountain passes, as several drivers had been shot, the company found it difficult to get men to carry the stages through, and offered double wages to any one who had the courage to drive over the road-agents dominions.

Buffalo Billy at once volunteered for the perilous work, and his first trip through he met with no resistance.

The next he was halted, and promptly obeying the order to throw up his hands, he was not molested, though the gold-box was taken from the coach, and all the passengers were robbed.

After this it was almost a daily occurrence for the road-agents to rob a stage-coach, and the Overland Company offered a reward of five thousand dollars for the capture of their chief and the band.

One day Billy drove away from the station with a coach full of women, not a single man having the pluck to go, and promptly, at their favorite place, the road-agents appeared.

"Halt! up with your hands!"

With military promptitude Buffalo Billy obeyed, and putting on the California brakes, he drew his horses to a stand-still.

"Well, what have you got to-day that's worthy our picking, my Boy Driver?" said the road-agent leader approaching the coach.

"Only women, and I beg you not to be brute enough to scare 'em," said Billy.

"Oh! they must pay toll; and they generally have good watches; but what is it, a woman's rights meeting, or a Seminary broke loose?"

"Ask 'em," was the quiet reply, and as the leader of the road-agents, closely followed by his half-dozen men, all in masks, rode up to the stage door, Billy suddenly drew his revolver and with the flash the chief fell dead.

"Out, boys!" yelled Billy, and the stage doors flew open, dresses and bonnets were cast aside, and nine splendid fellows began a rapid fire upon the amazed road-agents.

One or two managed to escape; but that was all, for after four of their number had fallen,

and they drawn up to expiate their crimes by hanging.

It was Billy's little plot, and he got the larger part of the reward, and the credit of ridding the country of a daring band of desperate men.

Shortly after this bold act, bearing of the continued failing health of his mother, Buffalo Billy, like the dutiful son he was, once more resigned his position as stage-driver, and returned to Kansas, arriving there a few months after the breaking out of the civil war in 1861.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BOY SOLDIER.

AFTER a very short stay at home Buffalo Billy began to show signs of uneasiness, for he was too near Leavenworth, then an important military post, not to get the soldier's fever for battles and marches.

He soon discovered that a company of cavalry was being raised to do service in Missouri, and he at once enlisted and went as a guard to a Government train bound to Springfield, Missouri, and after that he was made a dispatch runner to the different forts, and met with many thrilling adventures while in that capacity.

From this duty Buffalo Billy was sent as guide and scout to the Ninth Kansas Regiment which was ordered into the Kiowa and Comanche country, and it did good service there, and the young soldier added new laurels to his name.

The second year of the war Billy became one of the famous "Red Legged Scouts," formed of the most noted rangers of Kansas.

While a member of this daring band he was sent to guide a train to Denver, but upon arriving there, learning of the severe illness of his mother, he at once set off for home, going the entire distance alone and making wonderful time through a country infested with dangers.

To his joy, he found his mother still living, yet failing rapidly, and soon after his arrival she breathed her last and Buffalo Billy had lost his best, truest friend, and the sad event cast a gloom over the life of the young soldier.

As one of his sisters had married some time before, her husband took charge of the farm, while Billy returned to the army and was sent into Mississippi and Tennessee with his command.

But Billy did not relish military duty, for he had become too well accustomed to the free life of the plains, and, resigning his position as scout, started upon his return to the prairies.

But while on the way he came in sight of a

Billy saw five horses hitched to a fence on the other side of the house; but this array of numbers did not deter him when a woman called for aid, and dismounting quickly he bounded upon the piazza, and was just running into the door when a man came out into the hall and fired at him, but fortunately missed him.

Bill instantly returned the fire, and his quick, unerring aim sent a bullet into the man's brain.

At the shots a wilder cry came from within for help and two men dashed out into the hall, and, seeing Billy, three pistols flashed together.

But Billy was unhurt, and one of his foes fell dead, while springing upon the other he gave him a stunning blow with his revolver that put him out of the fight, and then bounded into the room to discover an elderly lady and a lovely young girl threatened by two huge ruffians, who were holding their pistols to their heads to try and force from them the hiding-place of their money and valuables.

Seeing Billy, they both turned upon him, and a fierce fight ensued, which quickly ended in the killing of both ruffians by the brave young soldier, who seemed to bear a charmed life, for he was unhurt, though he had slain four men in a desperate combat and wounded a fifth.

Just then into the room dashed three men, and their weapons were leveled at Buffalo Billy, and right then and there his days would have ended had it not been for the courage and presence of mind of the lovely young girl, who threw herself forward upon his breast, to the youth's great surprise, and cried out:

"Father! Brothers! don't fire, for this man is our friend."

The old man and his sons quickly lowered their rifles, while the former said:

"A friend in blue uniform, while we wear the gray?"

"I am a Union soldier, sir, I admit, and I was going by your home, heard a cry for help, and found your wife and daughter, as I suppose them to be, at the mercy of five ruffians, and I was fortunate enough to serve them.

"But I will not be made prisoner, gentlemen."

Billy's hands were on his revolvers and he looked squarely in the faces of those in his front, and they could see that he was a man who meant what he said.

"My dear sir, I am a Confederate, I admit, and this is my home; but I am not the one to do a mean action toward a Union soldier, and especially one who has just served me so well in killing these men, whom I recognize as jay-hawkers, who prey on either side, and own no allegiance to North or South.

"Here is my hand, sir, and I will protect you while in our lines."

Billy grasped the hand of the farmer, and then those of his sons, and all thanked him only for the service he had done them.

But Billy was surprised to find he was within the Confederate lines, and found by inquiring that he had taken the wrong road a few miles back.

The farmer was the captain of a neighborhood military company, and it was his custom to come home with his sons whenever he had opportunity, and arriving just as the fight ended he saw a man in gray uniform lying dead in the hall, and beholding Billy in the blue, had an idea that the Northern soldiers were on a raid, had been met by some of his men, and he certainly would have killed the young scout but for the timely act of his lovely daughter, Louise.

And it was this very circumstance, the meeting with Louise Frederici, the Missouri farmer's daughter, that caused Buffalo Billy to decide to remain in the army, and not to return to the plains, for when stationed in or near St. Louis, he could often see the pretty dark-eyed girl who had stolen his heart away.

Before the war ended Buffalo Billy returned to Kansas, but he carried with him the heart of Louise Frederici, and the promise that she would one day be his wife.

After a short visit to his sisters he again became a stage-driver, and it was by making a desperate drive down a mountain side to escape a band of road-agents that he won the well-deserved title of the Prince of the Reins.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN FETTERS.

ALL the time that Buffalo Bill was driving stage his thoughts were turning to dark-eyed pretty Louise Frederici in her pleasant Missouri home, and at last he became so love-sick that he determined to pay her a visit and ask her to marry him at once.

He was no longer a boy in size, but a tall, elegantly-formed man, though his years had not yet reached twenty-one.

He had saved up some money, and off to Missouri he started, and his strangely handsome face, superb form and comely manners were admired wherever he went, and people wondered who he was, little dreaming they were gazing upon a man who had been a hero since his eighth year.

He soon won Louise over to his way of thinking, by promising he would settle down, and they were married at farmer Frederici's home and started on their way, by a Missouri steamer, to Kansas.

Arriving at Leavenworth, Buffalo Bill and his bride received a royal welcome from his old friends, and they were escorted to their new home, where for awhile the young husband did "settle down."

But at last, finding he could make more money on the plains, and that being to his liking, he left his wife with his sisters and once more started for the far West, this time as a Government scout at Fort Ellsworth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SEEING SERVICE.

It was while in the capacity of scout at Fort Harker and Fort Hayes that Buffalo Bill added to his fame as an Indian-fighter, scout and guide, for almost daily he met with thrilling adventures, while his knowledge of the country enabled him to guide commands from post to post with the greatest of ease and without following a trail, but by taking a straight course across prairie or hill-land.

While in the vicinity of Hayes City Buffalo Bill had a narrow escape from capture, with a party that was under his guidance; in fact death would very suddenly have followed the capture of all.

A party of officers and their wives, well mounted and armed, were determined not to go with the slow wagon-train from one fort to the other, and accordingly Buffalo Bill was engaged to guide them.

He made known to them the great dangers of the trip, but they being determined, the party started, some dozen in all.

For awhile all went well, but then Buffalo Bill discovered signs of Indians, and hardly had the discovery been made when a large force, over two hundred in number, came in sight and gave chase.

Of course the party were terribly alarmed, and regretted their coming without an escort of soldiers.

But Buffalo Bill said quietly:

"You are all well mounted, so ride straight on, and don't push too fast, or get separated."

"And you, Cody?" asked an officer.

"Oh, I'll be along somewhere; but I've got a new gun, a sixteen-shooter, and I want to try just what it will do."

The Indians were now not more than half a mile away and coming on at full speed, with wild yells and whoops, confident of making a splendid capture.

Directing the officers what course to take, Buffalo Bill saw them start off at full speed while he remained quietly seated upon his splendid horse Brigham, a steed that equaled Sable Satan for speed and endurance.

It was evident that the red-skins were surprised at beholding a single horseman standing so calmly in their path, and awaiting their coming, and the party in flight looked back in great alarm as they saw that Buffalo Bill did not move, appearing like a bronze statue of horse and rider.

"What could it mean?"

"Was he mad?"

And many more were the comments made by the party, while the Indians were equally as inquisitive upon the subject.

Nearer and nearer came the rushing band, for what had two hundred mounted warriors to fear from one man?

Nearer and nearer, until presently Buffalo Bill was seen to raise his rifle, and a perfect stream of fire seemed to flow out of the muzzle, while the shots came in rapid succession.

It was a Winchester repeating rifle, and Buffalo Bill had been testing it thoroughly.

And the result was such that the Indians drew rein, for down in the dust had gone several of their number, while half a dozen ponies had been killed by the shots; in fact, fired into the crowded mass of men and horses, nearly every discharge had done harm.

With a wild, defiant war-cry, Buffalo Bill wheeled and rode away, loading his matchless rifle as he ran.

It did not take long for Brigham to overtake the horses in advance, and warm congratulations followed, for the officers and ladies had seen the daring scout check the entire band of red-skins.

But though temporarily stunned by the effects of the shots, for the Indians had not seen repeating rifles in those days, they soon rallied and came on once more at full speed.

And again did the scout drop behind and await their coming, to once more administer upon the amazed warriors a check that made them more cautious, for they kept out of range.

Yet they kept up the chase all day, and only drew off when the fort came in view, and the party arrived in safety in its walls.

CHAPTER XXV.

CAPTURING A HERD OF PONIES.

WHILE at the fort the colonel in command complained at the non-arrival of a drove of Government horses, as he was anxious to make a raid into the Indian country, and Buffalo Bill volunteered to go and hurry the cattle on.

He had been gone but a few hours from the fort when he crossed a trail which he knew to have been made by a large Indian village on the move.

Cautiously he followed it, and just at sunset came in sight of the camp, pitched at the head of a valley, and saw below a large herd of horses grazing.

To return to the fort for aid he knew would take too long, so he determined to make an attempt to capture the herd himself, and, with his field-glass carefully reconnoitered the surroundings as long as it was light.

He saw that the nature of the valley was such that the herd could only escape by two ways, one through the Indian village and the other at the lower end, where he had observed four warriors placed as a guard and herders.

"That is my quartette," he said to himself, and mounting Brigham he began to make his way around to the lower end of the valley.

After an hour's ride he gained the desired point, and then set down to work.

Carrying with him in case of need a complete Indian costume, he was not long in rigging himself up in it and painting his face.

Then he left Brigham in a canyon near by and cautiously approached the entrance to the valley, which was not more than two hundred yards wide at this point.

Peering through the darkness he saw the four dark objects, about equal distances apart, which he knew were the ponies of the four warriors on guard, and that they were lying down near in the grass he felt confident.

Getting past the line of herders he boldly advanced toward the one nearest the hill on the left, and knew he would be taken for some chief coming from the village and accordingly not dreaded.

It was just as he had expected: the Indian herder saw him coming directly from the village, as he believed and did not even rise from the grass as Buffalo Bill drew near.

With a word in Sioux Buffalo Bill advanced and suddenly threw himself upon the prostrate warrior.

There was a short struggle, but no cry, as the scout's hand grasped the red-skin's throat, and then all was still, the Indian pony lariatied near, not even stopping his grazing.

Throwing the red-skin's blanket over his body, Buffalo Bill moved away a few paces to where the pony stood, and called to the next herder in the Sioux tongue to come to him.

The unsuspecting warrior obeyed, and the next instant found himself in a gripe of iron and a knife blade piercing his heart.

"This is red work, but it is man to man and in a few days the whole band would make a strike upon the settlements," muttered the scout, as he moved slowly toward the position his enemy had left at his call.

As he reached the spot he saw the third warrior standing on his post and boldly walked up to him, when again the same short, fierce, silent fight followed and Buffalo Bill arose from the ground a victor.

The fourth, and only remaining guard he knew was over under the shadow of the hill, and thither he went.

Arriving near he did not see him, and looking around suddenly discovered him asleep at the foot of a tree.

"I'd like to let you sleep, Mr. Red-skin, but you'd wake up at the wrong time, so you must

follow your comrades to the nappy hunting-grounds," he muttered, as he bent over and seized the throat of the Indian in his powerful gripe.

The warrior was almost a giant in size, and he made a fierce fight for his life.

But the iron hold on his throat did not relax, and at last his efforts ceased and his grasp upon the scout, which had been so great he could not use his knife, weakened and there was no more show of resistance.

Then not an instant did Buffalo Bill tarry, but went up the valley, rounded up the herd of horses and quickly drove them away from the village, in which he knew slept half a thousand warriors.

Slowly he moved the large brute mass, and they went toward the mouth of the valley and were soon out upon the prairie.

Then mounting Brigham he urged them on until out of hearing of the camp, when he headed them for the fort.

It was a hard drive and taxed both Brigham and his rider fearfully; but at last the herd was driven to a good grazing place a few miles from the fort and Buffalo Bill left them and rode rapidly on, and just at dawn reported his valuable capture and that the same horses could be used in an attack upon the Indian camp.

The colonel at once acted upon his suggestion; the cavalymen who had no horses, loaded with their saddles, bridles and arms, went at a quick march to the grazing place of the horses, and ere the day was three hours old three hundred men were mounted and on the trail for the red-skin village, while the remainder of the ponies were driven to the fort.

Deprived of the greater part of their horses, the red-skins could march but slowly; but they were in full retreat when Buffalo Bill led the command in sight of them, and though the dismounted warriors fought bravely, they were severely whipped and all their village equipage captured or destroyed, while instead of attacking the white settlements as they had intended, they were glad enough to beg for relief.

This gallant act made the name of Buffalo Bill, or Pa-e-has-ka (Long Hair), as they called him, known to every Indian on the north-west border, and they regarded him with the greatest terror, while it made him an idol among the soldiers.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CHAMPION OF THE PLAINS.

As Buffalo Bill was known to be the most successful hunter on the prairies, shortly after his capture of the herd of Indian ponies he received an offer from the Kansas Pacific Railroad Company to keep their workmen supplied

with meat, and the terms allowed him were so generous that he felt he owed it to his family, for he had become the father of a lovely little daughter, Arta, born in Leavenworth, to accept the proposition, and did so.

The employees of the road numbered some twelve hundred, and Buffalo Bill's duty was to supply them with fresh meat, a most arduous task, and a dangerous one, for the Indians were constantly upon the war-path.

But he undertook the work, and it was but a very short while before his fame as a buffalo-killer equaled his reputation as an Indian-fighter, and often on a hunt for the shaggy brutes, he had to fight the red savages who constantly sought his life.

It was during his service for the Kansas Pacific that he was rechristened Buffalo Bill, and he certainly deserved the renewal of his name, as in one season he killed the enormous number of *four thousand eight hundred and twenty buffaloes*, a feat never before, or since equaled.

And during this time, in the perils he met with, and his numerous hair-breadth escapes, in conflict with red-skins, horse-thieves and desperadoes, it is estimated that over a score of human beings fell before his unerring rifle and revolvers, while, he still bearing a charmed life, received only a few slight wound

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CHAMPION.

SOME time after his great feat of killing buffalo for the Kansas Pacific, Buffalo Bill was challenged by Billy Comstock, another famous buffalo-hunter, and a scout and Indian interpreter, to a match at killing the shaggy wild animals.

Those who knew Comstock and had seen him among a herd of buffalo, and had heard of Buffalo Bill's exploits, were most desirous of making a match between the two to discover which was the best "killer."

On the other side, those who knew Buffalo Bill and had seen him at work at the buffaloes, were willing to bet high that he would prove the champion.

As the men were not only willing, but anxious to meet, it was not difficult for them to do so, and all preliminaries were satisfactorily arranged to all parties concerned.

The men were to, of course, hunt on horseback, and to begin at a certain hour in the morning and keep it up for eight hours, a large herd having just been found and its locality marked for the day of the sport.

The stakes were made five hundred dollars a side, and there were numbers, both ladies and gentlemen, out on horseback to see the sport.

The herd having been located early the next morning, the two hunters left for the field, and the large crowd followed at a distance.

The counters, those chosen to follow each hunter and count his killed, followed close behind Bill and Comstock, who rode side by side, chatting in a most friendly way until the herd was sighted.

Buffalo Bill was mounted upon Brigham, a noted buffalo horse, and he was armed with a breech-loading Springfield rifle, and a weapon which had sent many a red-skin to the happy hunting-grounds.

Comstock was also splendidly mounted, and carried his favorite buffalo repeating rifle, and both men felt confident of victory.

Reaching the herd, the two hunters, followed by their counters, well mounted also, dashed into a herd, and it quickly divided, giving each one an opportunity to show his skill, as though the buffaloes themselves sympathized with the match and were willing to do all in their power to forward it.

In his first run Buffalo Bill killed thirty-eight, while in the same length of time Billy Comstock dropped twenty-three, which gave the former the advantage thus far.

A rest was then called for both horses and men, and once more they started out for the second run, a small herd appearing opportunely in sight.

In this run Buffalo Bill's tally was eighteen to Comstock's fourteen, and another halt was made for rest and refreshments.

When called to the scratch for the third run, Buffalo Bill, knowing he had the best buffalo horse in the country, stripped him of saddle and bridle and sprung upon his bare back.

A third herd was looked up, and the two killers began their work with a will, and buffalo Bill sailed to the front with thirteen, which gave him a list of sixty-nine to Comstock's forty-six.

The third run closed the match, and Buffalo Bill was proclaimed the winner and the champion buffalo-killer of the prairies.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A GAME FOR LIFE AND DEATH.

HAVING concluded his engagement with the Kansas Pacific Railroad, Buffalo Bill once more became a Government scout, and it was while serving on the far border that he won the hatred of a notorious band of desperadoes whom he had several times thwarted in their intended crimes.

Hearing that they had said they would kill him at sight, he boldly rode into the town where they had their haunts, and, true to their word, two of them came out and attacked him.

At the first shot Bill was wounded in the right arm, which destroyed his aim, and, ere he could draw a revolver with his left hand, his horse fell dead beneath him, pinning him to the ground.

Instantly his foes rushed upon him to complete their work, when, rising on his wounded arm, he leveled his revolver with his left hand and shot them down as they were almost upon him.

An army officer who witnessed the affray was so much pleased with the nerve of Buffalo Bill that he presented him with a splendid horse, one of a pair he had just received from the East, and having had his wound dressed the scout rode back to camp delighted with his present.

But the leader of the desperado band still swore to kill Buffalo Bill, and to pick a quarrel with him one night in a saloon, boldly dared him to play him a game of cards.

"Yes, you accursed thief and murderer, I'll play you a game of cards if you will let me name the stakes," said Buffalo Bill.

"All right, name what you please, so you play," was the answer, and the crowd gathered eagerly around, confident that there would be trouble.

"I'll name life and death as the stakes," said Buffalo Bill.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that if you win the game I'll stand ten paces away and give you a shot at me; if I win, you are to give me a shot at you."

The desperado did not like this arrangement, but having challenged Buffalo Bill to play, and given him the choice of the stakes, he dared not back down, and said:

"All right, let us begin."

"Mind you, no cheating, for I shall shoot you the moment I catch you at it."

"Two can play at that game, Buffalo Bill," said the desperado, and seating themselves at the table the game was begun, each man having his revolver lying by his side.

Buffalo Bill was calm and smiling, for he had confidence in his universal good luck to win.

The desperado was pale and stern, and played warily, for he saw the eye of his foe watching him like a hawk.

Once Bill dropped his hand upon his revolver and his adversary attempted to do the same; but the scout was too quick for him and merely said:

"Beware, for if I catch you cheating, I will kill you."

"Who's cheating, Buffalo Bill?"

"You were about to make an attempt to do so; but I warn you," was the calm reply.

Then, in breathless silence the game went on, and Buffalo Bill won.

Instantly the desperado seized his revolver,

but he felt against his head the cold muzzle of a weapon, and heard the stern tones:

"Bent, I guess I'll save Buffalo Bill from killing you, by hanging you to the nearest tree."

The speaker was Wild Bill, who had stood behind the chair of the desperado.

All knew him, and that he was an officer of the law, and would keep his word.

Buffalo Bill said nothing, and the crime-stained wretch was dragged out of the saloon, a rope put around his neck, and he was hanged for his many red deeds, thereby escaping death at the hands of the scout.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BILL'S STORY OF HIS BECOMING AN ACTOR.

As Buffalo Bill in the past few years has become known as an actor, and appears as such with his Dramatic Combination, during the winter months, when he is not on the plains, it will not be by any means uninteresting to my readers to learn how he came to go upon the stage, and the story I give in his own words, in relating his experience to a reporter who had called upon him for some jottings regarding his life.

He said:

"It was in the fall of '71, that General Sheridan came to the plains with a party of gentlemen for the purpose of engaging in a buffalo-hunt, to extend from Fort McPherson, Nebraska, to Fort Hayes, Kansas, on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, a distance of 228 miles, through the finest hunting country in the world. In the party were James Gordon Bennett of the New York *Herald*, Lawrence and Leonard Jerome, Carl Livingstone, S. G. Heckshire, General Fitzhugh of Pittsburg, General Anson Stager of the Western Union Telegraph Company, and other noted gentlemen. I guided the party, and when the hunt was finished, I received an invitation from them to go to New York and make them a visit, as they wanted to show me the East, as I had shown them the West. I was then Chief of Scouts in the Department of the Platte. And in January, 1872, just after the Grand Duke Alexis's hunt, which, by the way, I organized, I got a leave of absence, and for the first time in my life found myself east of the Mississippi river.

"Stopping at Chicago two days, where I was the guest of General Sheridan, I proceeded to New York, where I was shown the 'elephant.' During my visit I attended the performance at the Bowery Theater, in company with Colonel E. Z. C. Judson (Ned Buntline), and witnessed a dramatization of Judson's story, entitled 'Buffalo Bill, King of Border Men.' The part of 'Buffalo Bill' was impersonated by J. B. Studley, an excellent

actor, and I must say the fellow looked like me, as his make-up was a perfect picture of myself. I had not watched myself very long before the audience discovered that the original Buffalo Bill was in the private box, and they commenced cheering, which stopped the performance, and they would not cease until I had shown myself and spoken a few words.

"At that time I had no idea of going on the stage, such a thought having never entered my head. But some enterprising managers, believing there was money in me, offered me as high as \$1,000 per week to go on the stage. I told them I would rather face 1,000 Indians than attempt to open my mouth before all those people. I returned to my duties as a scout, and during the summer of 1872 Ned Buntline was constantly writing to me to come East and go on the stage, offering large inducements. As scouting business was a little dull, I concluded to try it for awhile, and started East in company with Texas Jack. Met Buntline in Chicago with a company ready to support me.

"We were to open in Chicago in Nixon's Amphitheater, on December 16th, 1872. I arrived in Chicago December 12th, 1872. We were driven to the theater, where I was introduced to Jim Nixon, who said, 'Mr. Buntline, give me your drama, as I am ready to cast your piece, and we have no time to lose, if you are to open Monday, and these men who have never been on the stage will require several rehearsals.' Buntline surprised us all by saying that he had not written the drama yet, but would do so at once. Mr. Nixon said, 'No drama! and this is Thursday. Well, I will cancel your date.' But Buntline was not to be balked in this way, and asked Nixon what he would rent the theater one week for. 'One thousand dollars,' said Nixon. 'It's my theater,' said Buntline, making out a check for the amount. He rushed to the hotel, secured the services of several clerks to copy the parts, and in four hours had written 'The Scouts of the Prairie.' He handed Texas Jack and I our parts, told us to commit them to memory and report next morning for rehearsal. I looked at Jack's and then at my part. Jack looked at me and said, 'Bill, how long will it take you to commit your part?' 'About seven years, if I have good luck.' Buntline said, 'Go to work.' I studied hard, and next morning recited the lines, cues and all, to Buntline. Buntline said, 'You must not recite cues; they are for you to speak from—the last words of the persons who speak before you.' I said, 'Cues be d—d; I never heard of anything but a billiard cue.'

"Well, night came. The house was packed. Up went the curtain. Buntline appeared as Cale Durg, an old Trapper, and at a certain time Jack and I were to come on. But we

were a little late, and when I made my appearance, facing 3,000 people, among them General Sheridan and a number of army officers, it broke me all up and I could not remember a word. All that saved me was my answer to a question put by Buntline. He asked, 'What detained you?' I told him I had been on a hunt with Milligan. You see Milligan was a prominent Chicago gentleman who had been hunting with me a short time before on the plains, and had been chased by the Indians, and the papers had been full of his hunt for some time; Buntline saw that I was 'up a stump,' for I had forgotten my lines, and he told me to tell him about the hunt. I told the story in a very funny way, and it took like wild-fire with the audience.

"While I was telling the story, Buntline had whispered to the stage manager that when I got through with my story to send on the Indians. Presently Buntline sung out: 'The Indians are upon us.' Now this was 'pie' for Jack and I, and we went at those bogus Indians red hot until we had killed the last one and the curtain went down amid a most tremendous applause, while the audience went wild. The other actors never got a chance to appear in the first act. Buntline said, 'Go ahead with the second act, it's going splendid.' I think that during the entire performance, neither Jack nor myself spoke a line of our original parts. But the next morning the press said it was the best show ever given in Chicago, as it was so bad it was good, and they could not see what Buntline was doing all the time if it took him four hours to write that drama.

"Our business was immense all that season, and if we had been managed properly we would have each made a small fortune. As it was I came out \$10,000 ahead. In June, 1873, I returned to the plains, came East again in the fall, this time my own manager. I got a company, took the noted 'Wild Bill' with me, but could not do much with him as he was not an easy man to handle, and would insist on shooting the supers in the legs with powder, just to see them jump. He left a few months later and returned to the plains. He was killed in August, 1876, in Deadwood.

"In the summer of 1876 I was Chief of Scouts under General Carr, afterward with General Crook and General Terry.

"On the 17th of July I killed Yellow Hand, a noted Cheyenne chief, and took the first scalp for Custer. I returned to the stage in October, 1876, and during the season of 1876 and 1879 I cleared \$38,000. I have generally been successful financially on the stage. I am now in the cattle business in Nebraska, to which place I will return as soon as the season is over, providing nothing serious occurs to call me home earlier.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE YELLOW HAND DUEL.

As Buffalo Bill, in the foregoing chapter speaks of his killing Yellow Hand, the celebrated Cheyenne chief, who was greatly feared by his own people, and a terror to the whites, I will give an account of that tragic duel between a white man and two Indians, for another chief also rode down and attacked the noted scout, after his red comrade had fallen.

When the Indian war of 1876 broke out Buffalo Bill at once closed his dramatic season, and started post haste for the West, having received a telegram from General E. A. Carr asking for his services as scout in the coming campaign.

He joined the command at Fort D. A. Russell, where the famous Fifth Cavalry Regiment was then in camp, and arriving received a boisterous welcome from his old comrades, who felt that, with Buffalo Bill as Chief of Scouts, they would surely have warm work with the Indians.

The Fifth Cavalry was at once ordered to operate in scouting the country on the South Fork of the Cheyenne and to the foot of the Black Hills, and it was while driving the Indians before them that the news came of Custer's fatal fight with Sitting Bull on the Little Big Horn.

General Merritt, who had superseded Carr in command marched at once to the Big Horn country, and while *en route* there came news of a large force of warriors moving down to join Sitting Bull.

Instantly five hundred picked men of the Fifth started back by forced marches, and Buffalo Bill, splendidly mounted, kept on ahead of the command a couple of miles.

Discovering the Indians, he at the same time beheld two horsemen whom he saw to be whites, riding along unconscious of the presence of foes.

He knew that they must be scouts bearing dispatches, and at once determined to save them for they were riding in a direction down one valley that would bring them directly upon the red-skins, who had already seen them, and had sent a force of thirty warriors out to intercept them.

Instantly Buffalo Bill dashed over the ridge of the hill that concealed him from the view of the Cheyennes, and rode directly toward the band going to attack the two white horsemen.

They halted suddenly at sight of him, but, seeing that he was alone, they started for him with wild yells.

But still he kept on directly toward them, until within range, when he opened upon them with his matchless Evans rifle, a thirty-four-shot repeater, and a hot fight began, for they returned the fire.

This was just what Buffalo Bill wanted, for

the firing alarmed the horsemen and placed them on their guard, and he knew that the Indian volleys would be heard at the command and hasten them forward.

Having dropped a couple of red-skins and several ponies, Buffalo Bill wheeled to the rightabout, dashed up to the top of a hill, and, signaling to the two whites to follow him, headed for the command at full speed.

As he had anticipated, the two men were scouts with important dispatches for General Merritt, and Bill's bold act had not only saved their lives, but also the dispatches, and the result of it was that the Fifth Cavalry went at once into line of battle, while the Cheyennes also formed for battle, though evidently surprised at being headed off at that point.

But they saw that they were double the force of the whites, and were determined upon a fight, and their chiefs reconnoitered carefully their foes' strength and position.

Buffalo Bill also volunteered to go out and get a closer look at them, to see what they were up to, and General Merritt told him to do so, but not to venture too near and expose himself.

As he left the line two Indian horsemen also rode out from among their comrades, and one was some lengths in front of the other.

At a glance Buffalo Bill saw that the two were full chiefs, and they had not advanced far toward each other when he discovered that he was the especial object of their attention.

But though one halted, the other came on, and the scout and the chief came within a hundred yards of each other.

Then the Indian cried out in his own tongue:

"I know Pa-e-has-ka the Great White Hunter and want to fight him."

"Then come on, you red devil, and have it out," shouted back Buffalo Bill, and forgetting General Merritt's orders not to expose himself, and to the horror of the regiment, every man of whom saw him, as well as did the Indians, he dashed at full speed toward the chief, who likewise, with a wild yell rode toward him.

Together both fired, the chief with his rifle, and Buffalo Bill with his revolver, and down dropped both horses.

Buffalo Bill nimbly caught on his feet, while the Indian was pinned by one leg under his horse, and with his war-cry the scout rushed upon him.

As he advanced the chief succeeded in releasing his leg from beneath his horse and again fired, as did Buffalo Bill, and both of them with revolvers.

The Indian's bullet cut a slight gash in Bill's arm, while he struck the red-skin in the leg, and the next instant sprung upon him with his knife, which both had drawn.

The hand-to-hand fight was hardly five seconds in duration, and Buffalo Bill had driven his knife into the broad red breast, and then tore from his head the scalp and feather war-bonnet, and waving it over his head, shouted in ringing tones:

"Bravo! the first scalp to avenge Custer!"

A shout of warning from the cavalry caused him to turn quickly and he beheld the second chief riding down upon him at full speed.

But Bill turned upon him, and a shot from his revolver got him another scalp.

But hardly had he stooped to tear it from the skull, when the Indians, with wildest yells, charged upon him.

They were nearer to him than was the regiment, and it looked bad for Buffalo Bill; but the gallant Fifth charged in splendid style, met the Indians in a savage fight, and then began to drive them in wild confusion, and pushed them back into the Agency a sorely whipped body of Cheyennes, and grieving over heavy losses.

Upon reaching the Agency Buffalo Bill learned that the two Indians he had killed in the duel were Yellow Hand and Red Knife, and Cut Nose, the father of the former swore some day to have the scout's scalp.

But Buffalo Bill laughed lightly at this threat, evidently believing the old adage that "A threatened man is long lived."

CHAPTER XXXI.

CONCLUSION.

HAVING gone over many of the thrilling scenes in the life of W. F. Cody, Buffalo Bill, from boyhood to manhood, and shown what indomitable pluck he possesses, and the pinnacle of fame he has reached unaided, and by his own exertions and will, I can only now say that much remains to be told of his ripper years, from the time he stepped across the threshold from youth to man's estate, for since then his life has been one long series of perilous adventures which, though tinged with romance, and seeming fiction, will go down to posterity as true border history of this most remarkable man, the truly called King of Prairiemen.

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